

Red Pen Neurosis

Anna Hensley

I can be neurotic. I arrange all of my books alphabetically, according to author in four sections: fiction, non-fiction, poetry and crafts. When I clean, I always begin with the kitchen, move to the living room, the bathroom, the bedroom and then I end by vacuuming. There is, of course, no deviation from the routine. It takes 55 minutes for all of my laundry to be washed and dried; it takes me an hour and a half to fold it. I always write on my calendar with the same blue pen. In my refrigerator, I keep the butter, yogurt and eggs on the top shelf, the bread, cheese and leftovers on the second shelf and all of the beverages on the bottom. Fruit is stored in the left drawer, vegetables on the right, and everything is always in its proper place.

I am also a neurotic corrector of grammar. Red pen in hand, I could mark up the world. I am the one who, rather than simply reading the memo handed to her at work, takes the time to correct all of its errors. When I stumble upon grammatical errors in the books I read, I become horribly distracted and can't go on until I've penciled in the proper corrections. I remind friends and family that things went 'well,' not 'good,' during casual conversation. When I overhear others correcting the grammar of the world, I get excited, because it means I'm not the only crazy one. I even edit my own journal.

Naturally, my self-assumed role of the editing queen was the hardest thing for me to come to terms with as I began tutoring. The role of the tutor as we discussed it in class made sense to me. I knew that global concerns were more important than mechanics and that those issues like tone and organization should be the primary concerns in the beginning stages of writing. It wasn't hard to see how indirect tutoring could be more beneficial to most learners, rather than a cut and dry attack of the red pen. I understood the effectiveness of the elusive ideal tutor that we spent so much of our first class sessions discussing, and I wanted to be that tutor.

My first tutoring session was a walk-in and came as a surprise, so unlike many of my fellow tutoring rookies, I didn't have time to be nervous. But I also didn't have time to mentally prepare. I walked in the door, was handed a folder, introduced to my learner, and seconds later I was in the booth. Sitting there, properly arranged with my learner sitting towards the opening so as not to feel trapped, I panicked. I felt trapped.

I did my best to cover up my stunned stupidity by beginning with the basics. After customary greetings, introductions and the usual how-are-yous, we began filling out the personal information for the log sheet and discussed the learner's reason for coming to the TLC. A----- was a foreign exchange student from Japan who had been studying in Stevens Point for almost two years, and this was her final semester at UWSP before she returned home. She was very soft-spoken, and seemed to have a competent handle on the English language, conversing with relative ease, but her confidence in her writing was lacking. She had come to the TLC that day because she was working on a couple of extra credit projects for her English 102 class: one, a review of a presentation about the Vietnam war that she had attended, and the other, a response to an article about the effects of Westernization of Filipino culture.

I read through both of the short essays silently since A----- felt uncomfortable having them read aloud. In retrospect, the review of the presentation was rather vague, and a few of the ideas expressed were confusing or seemed to contradict one another. The article about Filipino culture had struck a chord with A-----, and so her response to it was much more passionate than the first piece. It included a personal anecdote which was both humorous and relevant, and the sense of investment and concern for the issues at hand was very powerful. But

there were places within the piece that were begging to be expanded upon, that needed to be further developed in order to give the piece a sense of completeness. As I read, I would like to believe that I recognized all of these strengths and weaknesses on some level, but I couldn't free myself from my most immediate concern in order to fully take in each piece so that I could give meaningful, useful feedback. That most immediate concern, of course, was: *What am I supposed to do now?* In my panicked state, I let both A----- and my own instinct answer my question.

As soon as she could see that I was finished reading, A----- quietly asked, "Is my grammar okay?"

Grammar! I could do grammar. I could handle grammar. I could rope grammar in with one swift throw of the lasso and hogtie it into submission. At the mere mention of the 'G' word, I lost all sight of everything that I had learned in practicum, and I went to it. I corrected each and every grammar error in both pieces, offering a quick, wholly inadequate explanation of what the 'right' way was and why. When all was mechanically well, I sent my seemingly satisfied learner on her way. She had asked; I had answered.

But left alone in the booth, faced with an empty log sheet that needed to be filled out, preferably with the details of a productive interaction between an attentive, globally concerned tutor and a receptive, cooperative learner, I realized that I had fallen horribly short of glory. I had, in fact, fallen right on my face.

"I totally screwed up," I told my mom that weekend when I ventured home in search of some much needed comfort food. "I did exactly what I am *not* supposed to do. Anybody could have corrected her grammar. She was cheated."

I wanted to be a good tutor, and after my first session I felt that I was unarguably the opposite. I was nothing more than an annoyingly neurotic grammar priss. I was embarrassed about the way that my first session had gone, and my only consolation was that it was a walk-in learner, and I probably wouldn't have to worry about showing my shamed face to A----- again or wasting more of her time with my useless editing addiction.

Of course, I was wrong. The following week, I found A's name on my tutoring schedule once more, but this time as a 157 student. Not only would I be working with A----- again, but I would be working with her on a weekly basis for the rest of the semester. I took a deep breath, and resolved to compensate. Going into my second session with A-----, I was collected and focused on the task at hand. I was determined to make her 157 experience worth her while.

The writing that A----- did to meet her 157 requirements was always on the same, deeply personal level as the response that she brought in to our first session. Not only was A----- engaged in her work, but I was as well. I looked past grammar, and began to focus on what she was saying in her writing, and the more we worked together, the easier this became for me. By the middle of the semester, when A----- asked about grammar, I would actually have to read the piece through a second time in order to zero in on errors. And when I did find errors, I didn't simply correct them, but also looked the respective convention up in the handbook in order to offer A----- a more thorough explanation.

It was doubly interesting to fight the editorial urge while working with A-----, because as a foreign exchange student who wasn't particularly confident in her ability to write in English, grammar was a primary concern for A----- as well. During any given session, she would ask me to check her grammar in a piece multiple times. For the most part, A-----'s grammar was fine, and as the semester progressed and she was

writing more and more, it began to present as much as a problem in her writing as it would for the average, native English speaker. Grammar was not something that she needed to be particularly concerned about. So as I tried to steer myself away from the grammar itch, I made an effort to bring her along with me. When she would ask about the grammar on a rough draft, I would simply tell her that it wasn't really an issue and that it was something we could focus more on with her revised drafts. I asked plenty of questions about organization, tone and the clarity of ideas in order to draw A-----'s attention to those issues.

During our most recent session, A----- brought in a fun series of poems that she had decided to write about her work-study job as a custodian. A-----'s enthusiasm about the project that she was undertaking was invigorating, and she came to the booth armed with a series of questions concerning voice, structure and redundancy. It was a dynamic half-hour. We experimented with moving different parts of the poems around, looked at different ways to reword some of the awkward lines and brainstormed for ideas and images to include in the final poem of the series that she hadn't started on yet. For the first time in the ten weeks that we had been working together, neither one of us mentioned, or probably even thought of, correcting grammar. The session marked a small, but significant, victory for both of us.

A few weeks ago, a friend asked me to look over a scholarship essay that he had been working on before he sent his application in. I more than willingly agreed to do so, and I went all out, pinpointing all of the little grammar errors and minute, sentence-level structure issues. Being the neurotic dork that I am, I felt a little rush of exhilaration as I marked up the paper. I had fun, and I didn't experience any of the guilt that I had felt during my first tutoring session, because what I was doing was appropriate to the situation. I was acting as a friend, looking over a draft by a good writer who had already put a lot of work into the draft. It was okay to edit. However, when acting as a tutor, my role is different, and it is a role that I am slowly but surely getting better at playing. Fortunately, as I learned that grammar was really only a small part of the picture, I was able to help another writer see the same. But rest assured all of you who insist on spelling 'all right' as if it were a single word- my inner grammar nerd hasn't gone anywhere. She just knows when to keep quiet.

Obstacles to Tutoring

Tami C. Larsen

Each time you enter the booth and begin to tutor someone, you must evaluate and assess each individual separately. Just as each of us has our favorite music or food, we all have a preferred way to write, read, and learn. Just as each of us has a routine by which we get ready in the morning, we all have certain "routines" or "processes" by which we write, read, or learn. Just because each of us prefers different music, it does NOT mean one piece of musical composition is "BETTER" than another. We as tutors must not only recognize the differences in our learners, we must also understand and adapt to different writing, reading, and learning styles. We must recognize the differences in how one learner gets from one point to another within reading, writing, and learning. We must acknowledge there is no "correct" or "better" way to travel on the journey of reading, writing, and learning. There are only different, unique, creative ways of getting to the same spot. There are three obstacles that a tutor has to beware of when helping a learner:

- Not recognizing differences in preference.
- Not recognizing differences in learning process.
- Not accepting that there is no "correct" way to get to the end result.

It does not matter how much knowledge the tutor holds if these essential components cannot be recognized and the obstacles cleared. Success of the tutoring session will depend on overcoming your own instincts to make the learner write, read, and learn in your style. Almost all tutors would agree that with the power of these three obstacles it becomes hard to focus on the learner. These obstacles make it even more difficult to be successful with a learner. Each of these obstacles can be hurdled if only we can see them as obstacles ahead of time so we have enough time to get a running start.

Obstacle One: We as tutors try to inflict our "practiced" type of writing, reading, or learning on our learners.

We must be able to set our own likes and dislikes aside and sincerely accept the student's way of writing, reading, or learning. Our favorite way or subject for writing, reading, or learning may NOT be the learner's favorite way or subject. We must realize that our tastes or styles should not alter the learner's style or subject. For example, I like to write papers on the environment. I have certain opinions about how a paper on the environment should be written. However, I must not sway my learners to my writing style or opinions on the subject. Furthermore, I should not demand that my learner arrange his or her paper in a certain way because that would be how "I would do it."

Research indicates that the only way one learns to write is by writing. Choice is important in this process because it emphasizes the selection process, which is crucial to writing, and because it enables us to say that copying is not writing. Ian Cassiman gives a good example when he writes about his British novel course: "The professor assigns the books from what she has read and from what she thinks is suitable for our fancy. She assigns the books with defiant consideration of the students. So therefore our discussion and activities revolve around her theoretical disposition which at times is again, not MY interest. But having a doctoral degree and many years of experience of life in general, I am at the command, the direction of the professor" (Cassiman, 3/25/98). We must allow our learners to have flexibility in what and how they read, write, and learn.

Obstacle Two: We as tutors try to use our routines instead of conforming to our learners.

As a tutor it is so easy to conform to our own comfortable ways of writing, reading, and learning. This can be very frustrating to our learners, who are individuals, with unique backgrounds, styles, techniques, and needs. We must be able to step outside our ways and into theirs. We must realize that our ways are not their ways in order to assist them in their writing, reading, and learning.

Our learners' writing, reading, and learning cannot turn into our personal agendas. Most of us have preferred ways to perceive and process new information. Today those preferences are often called learning styles. Writing and reading also take on different styles (Ellis, 1994). Each writer and reader goes about the task differently in his or her own unique style making the process very versatile. How our learners compose is a product of many different aspects of their lives. As Brock Wojtalewicz remarks, "I believe that not only our friends and family, but also geography has much to do with our way of speaking, and consequently our way of writing" (Wojtalewicz, 3/11/98). In order to preserve our learners' style of writing we, as tutors, must conform to their process/style of writing. We must assess our learners and either adapted to the way they have already established or we must help them develop a routine of writing, reading, and learning that meets their needs.

Each learner will have specific and unique needs from you as a tutor. It is important that we set aside some time to establish those needs. We must get to know our learner as a person in order to understand perspectives, styles, and needs. Discovering a learner's needs is sometimes hard, but once you both know what each of you expects it will be much easier to have a successful tutoring session. No matter what setting provides for a tutorial, however, its basic purpose is unvarying: it is to help writers gain the confidence and skill necessary for them to write well **independently**. The process through which tutors help writers learn to do so differs in complexity and duration depending on each writer's ability, level of achievement, previous experience, attitudes, values, and availability (Meyer & Smith, 1987).

Obstacle Three: We must realize that there is no "best" or "right" ways to write, read, and learn.

We must realize that the process we as tutors go through to get something accomplished is NOT the "RIGHT" way. It is just a way of getting results for us, and this does not mean this is how the learners get to their end product. What is best for us as tutors will not necessarily be the best for our learners. For example, I'm a verbal learner; however, there are others who just don't learn this way, and sometimes verbal learning can hinder the learners if they cannot concentrate well enough when someone is talking about the subject. It is imperative the tutor adapt to the learner's way of getting results and not to pressure the learner into "our" ways.

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The Tutoring Game

Jodi Loberger

Contents

12 booths, 1 paper, 2 writing utensils, thesaurus, dictionary, computer, and a 30-minute timer.

The Object

To identify through "sketched clues" as many components as necessary to assess the merits of the paper, and how you can teach your teammate to remedy them.

Preparation

Player one is labeled the "tutor." Player two is labeled the "learner." Player 1 has the largest responsibility.

Following are the steps to take for Player 1 before beginning:

- (1) Remove wrapper and open your mind.
- (2) Assemble pieces in an orderly fashion.
 - (a) Gather your confidence.
 - (b) Be sure to maintain your mind in an open position.
 - (c) Be aware of backup tools: know where your favorite grammar book is located, where handouts are situated in files, and position of reference people.

Beginning

A third party, labeled "Cheryl the secretary" will divide all of the tutors and learners into individual teams of 2 players each. Player 1 extends hand to player 2. Smiles, introductions, and friendly questions are all fair game. Then select a booth. Player 1, the tutor, must be situated toward the inside. The paper and writing utensils must be placed so that all players have access to them. Special hint: Player 1 must be especially perceptive during this time. Body language, appearance, tone of voice, and comments of player 1 must be mentally noted. Only the mind is allowed to record observations. All information garnered will serve as clues that tell player 1 how to approach player 2 and the errors that will become apparent.

Symbols

Negative comments=player is discouraged, has lack of confidence

Blank look, tired demeanor=player may be depressed

Strong accent and slow to respond=may be an ESL player-proceed slowly, and clearly enunciate.

The Play

Player 2 can begin by specifying assignment and how the paper may relate. It works best if that same person proceeds by reading the paper aloud. Since player 1 is the principle player, he or she can dictate when player 2 starts and stops. Player 1 should first focus on fixing large-scale errors of organization and coherence-they are worth more points than sentence level revisions. Player 1's principle role is to help player 2 find errors. Player 2's role is to physically fix them. Remember, you only have 30 minutes. If you can complete big issues worth the most points, proceed to grammar/spelling/syntax. **Note to player 1:** IF YOU CAST THE DIE AND FALL INTO FOREIGN TERRITORY ("UNFAMILIAR SUBJECT-LAND"), PROCEED FORWARD. The basic skills you assembled in the preparation stages will be useful in this portion of the journey.

Player 2 is--	Player 1 should--
--frustrated with teacher.	--take empathetic route, not sympathetic.
--ESL.	--utilize permission to cross over onto "editor" side. Player 2 may not have necessary information needed to proceed.
--not catching on.	--try switching between visual, audio, or hands-on clues. Different people learn differently.
--emotionally unstable.	--listen carefully without judging or interrupting, then request assistance of third party ("senior staff" players).

Winning

Player 1 must try to pass on as many tools as necessary during the 30 minutes. Smiles, encouragement, explanation of grammar rules, style, organization, etc. are all worth points. The key is that Player 2 assimilates them. If player 1 is not clear or effective in conveying tools, chances of winning decrease.

Player 1 is--	Player 1 should--
--unsure about a rule.	--consult handbook or other third parties.
--burnt out.	--find someone else to assume role of player 1 (especially after 2 back-to-back games-1 hour of Play can be draining).

Finishing

Player 1 and player 2 are a team. Whether winning or losing, the important issue is that points have been accumulated. This is done through passing information from the first to the second. To be successful in subsequent games, player 2 should pick a few cards from player 1' s deck to use in between sessions of play. And in conclusion, although player 1 is usually the primary one, he or she can gain information from player 2 without loss of points.

Final note: Points may be stored in between games. Smiles, "hellos," and honesty all can accumulate and add to your score. The tutoring game is not a competition, but rather a test in personal improvement. The game scores how much player 1 helps the second, but new tools can be used by the tutor, if the tutor remembers to be positive and focus on rewards that the game gives. The tutoring game will be full of challenges and frustrations, but in the end satisfaction will be the net winnings.

Tutoring a Subject You Know Nothing About

Jessica Nelson

As you walk into the Tutoring Learning Center you notice many things such as the tables, colorful posters, cubicles, and the many different students who make the TLC their home. There are nervous freshmen, ESL students, and the noisiest group of all, the tutors. The Tutoring Learning Center is home to a wide variety of students from all different majors and backgrounds. These tutors have answered the question of, "What is your major?" so many times, that they have come to expect the, "How can you help me with this when it isn't even in your major?" that inevitably follows. Although the tutors smile and have a pat answer handy, the question is a valid one. How can you tutor something you know nothing about and feel comfortable doing so? The answer to this lies in several different places. First of all, reading and writing is not a subject the tutors are ignorant of. As tutors, we are students who are successful at reading and writing papers; as students, we have learned the ropes and have discovered what it is that professors want from their students. Secondly, much as becoming a successful student is a learning process, so is becoming a successful tutor. An important distinction to make at this point is that the tutor is not responsible for teaching a subject; that is the teacher's job. A tutor is, however, responsible for helping the student understand and process the information that a teacher has given them. By this definition, it is not necessary for a tutor to know everything about every subject; it is only necessary for the tutor to know how to help the student. Therefore, the tutors are qualified to help learners with many different types of subjects.

One common aspect of all the reading/writing tutors is that they are chosen because of their success at reading and writing papers. The tutors are generally upperclassmen who have experience in writing papers across disciplines and gleaning content from their readings. This experience may come from General Degree Requirement classes, classes within their major, or even leisure reading. The tutor's knowledge of reading and writing should help decrease the worries of the tutor and the student. Generally, when confronted with a paper outside of their area of expertise, what the tutors do is not correct the factual information, but ensure that the arguments are well-supported and seem logical. This may take the form of asking the learner questions about their writing or talking through what the tutor has comprehended from the reading.

This all sounds good in theory, but what happens when a tutor who has never taken a film class is confronted with a film paper? First, a sense of panic or self-doubt will probably set in. However, after taking a deep breath, the tutor will plunge in. Again, armed with the knowledge that the tutor is a successful reader and writer, they can feel confident reading the paper and giving feedback on it. Perhaps all that is needed is for the tutor to ask for clarification of a sentence or the purpose of the piece; or it might not be that easy, the tutor and learner may have to make a trip to the filing cabinets or bookshelves to figure something out. Several tutors have found that the best way to deal with a learner who brings in an unfamiliar subject is to be up-front with the learner; the tutor should explain that they are unfamiliar with the subject matter but would be happy to read the paper for the learner. This often puts the learner at ease since most first time learners in the TLC think that the tutor will be a demi-god when it comes to the subject matter. By showing the learner that they are on equal footing when it comes to the subject matter, mutual respect can more easily be developed.

Chris Anson in *Teaching Composition* states that, "in teaching writing we are also teaching people how to explore who they are and, in the process, change what and how they think" (1995, p. 396). However, the learner is not the only one who can change what and how they think by exploring the ideas presented in papers. The tutoring process is therefore a learning one for both the learner and the tutor. As tutors we want the learner to

"outgrow" their tutor. "Tutorial conversation may also deal with the writer's anxiety, poor motivation, cultural confusions, ineffective or dysfunctional composing strategies, lack of knowledge, or inability to follow assignment directions" (Harris, 1992, p. 373). By focusing on these items instead of just strictly focusing on reading and writing, the tutor helps the learner to expand as a writer not just produce writing.

As a tutor I prefer to be a "sounding board" for ideas. I want the learners to feel comfortable asking questions or proposing answers to questions asked about their writing. Tutors are not proofreaders nor are they editors; they are peers. Much like life, tutoring is a learning process. No one instinctively knows the perfect questions to ask; the skills are developed over time. Not knowing a subject is sometimes the best way in which to help the learner see what someone else will read in their paper. In this way I feel that the learner is able to grow more than if we as tutors just correct their writing.

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R-E-S-P-E-C-T, I'll Show You What It Means to Me, As a Tutor of Course

Travis Peterson

Human beings are creatures in need of connections, and for that reason, I became a reading and writing tutor. My endeavor to become a tutor has, at times, been long and arduous, but I've prevailed among sloppy poems and slipshod argumentative essays to become what one might call an experienced provider. My feelings towards my tutoring position at the TLC are that of one who facilitates thinking, learning, and writing, while also helping a learner find his or her voice. My own experiences as a learner have provided me with countless piles of information that I am now able to apply to being a tutor. I constantly hope to invoke emotion, truth, voice, and style in my learners so that they ultimately make a connection with me in order to feel comfortable with themselves and their own abilities.

I started my journey my first year at UWSP, with a tutor named Sheila. I firmly believe that she gave me the starting point for my views towards being a tutor, while also showing me that I can be who I am without worrying about what anyone else thinks. A good freshman writer will already know where his or her writing stands and I fell into that category. I was good, but not that good. I wanted to write a short story and I had absolutely no experience, but I went at it anyway. I typed away at my computer for weeks, handing in little copies of it to Sheila as I went along. Finally, I came up with a 47-page final rough draft and I took it in to Sheila. I think any tutor would be daunted by such a manuscript, but Sheila took it in stride, told me she'd take it home to read, and tell me what she thought next time. To my surprise, Sheila did just that.

My story was a complicated one, about a gay man with AIDS who befriends a younger boy having major problems with his girlfriend. It was sloppy and unorganized, but it was my first major work. I was proud of it. I was proud that I was finally finding my voice through my stories, writing what I actually wanted to write without having to worry about what a professor might think. I wanted to write about AIDS, friendship, love, lost love, fighting, and even death. So I did, and Sheila went along for the ride without fear, embarrassment, or too much structure. I think that Sheila was proud of it too. That first tutoring experience taught me everything I like about tutoring and everything I try to employ while I tutor.

It is my belief that all human beings simply want to feel comfortable where they are at in life. Starting new schools, new careers, or new relationships are always scary and uncomfortable, just like coming into the booth for the first time. My goal in tutoring is to make my learners feel comfortable, and no matter what we are working on, I feel it is my duty to make them want to come back the next week. I always try to create some kind of connection that the learner can find nowhere else, especially with a learner who is working on creative writing projects. He or she needs to have someone who he or she can trust with his or her inner-most secrets, desires, fantasies, and ideas. Without that connection, everything written and talked about in the booth is completely superficial.

The only way that I was ever made to feel comfortable in the booth was through Sheila, who taught me that not all people in central Wisconsin are closed-minded and bitter towards "different" people. In a University setting, ideas can be acceptable no matter what they are and she showed me to simply find my voice and go with it; say what I want to say. She is my model for the way I tutor. I have a few learners working on poetry and I make sure to tell them that they should not hold anything back "What are you feeling?" I ask, or "Where does this poem come from?" "Are you connected to it in some way?" - All important questions. The connection to the writing is

the key element in creative writing, but the learner also needs to trust and confide in his or her tutor in order to write from the heart; to not hold anything back and to write with conviction and feeling.

Therefore, tutoring is a connection-oriented experience. I have a learner this semester who is working on poetry and I can tell that she has a feminist tone to all of her writing, and knowing that, I try to push her towards that even more because I know that it evokes feeling and emotion in her. Her explanations, ideas, and complications all stem from the ideas she is trying to formulate about what it means to be a woman. Just as I was trying to formulate ideas about what it means to be a gay man with AIDS, she was forming her ideas about the good sides and bad sides to being a woman. She is a rather inexperienced writer, but that makes no difference. I feel just as good helping her, if not better, because I am helping her, in a way, to find who she is and to find the voice inside of her that so desperately wants to come out. I have connected with her in some way so that she feels comfortable telling me that she does not like women who act like Barbie, nor does she ever plan to be like one. I do not think that is something a learner tells just anyone. Writing poetry can be a very personal experience and it can be hard to share it with people, especially a semi-stranger trying to critique it. The importance of that connection, is now, I hope, obvious.

There is also, sometimes, a need for learners to take a break from the standard academic setting. So much of University education stems from remembering and regurgitating information. The tutoring environment provides me, and learners, with the ability to escape that for a while and actually think about human issues and ideas outside of a solely academic setting. For a half an hour each week, I am able to sit down with someone and truly get to know her or him; sit beside him or her and get inside his or her head. Sitting in classes all day can become such a tedious activity - listening to professors drone on about mitosis or the emergence of absolutism in the eighteenth century - but where is the personable aspect of the University education? When is there time for the learner and the professor to sit down and really get to know each other? Will my learner ever be able to sit down with her history professor and tell her that she is really interested in the feminist aspects of history, or is taking a feminist class the only thing that lets that interest shine through? All students want to feel like they are important to the people who are teaching them, and I try to give them that when professors seemingly aren't always able.

I feel, however, that it is *multiple* connections that help students to learn; connections to the material and themselves, not only the professor or the tutor. The truly great student knows exactly who he or she is and what he or she wants to get out of a particular class or assignment. I try to facilitate those kinds of ideas in my tutoring sessions by leaving everything completely open-ended. I try not to impose too much on my learner by sitting back and letting him or her explore the material him/herself. Of course, there are occasions that are different. This model of finding connections and voice works most well for freshmen, or 157 learners who are new to the idea of writing. For a 357 learner, a voice has probably already been found and all that needs to take place is a connection. However, the connection is just as important in a 357 class because the learner will still only write superficially until that connection is made. But I do think that for a 157 learner, finding him/herself even more important than writing well. Finding what interests him or her, what makes him or her angry, sad, or happy, will do more for his or her future writing than telling him or her what is right and wrong with his or her writing. Correction is part of the tutoring process, but I believe it should be a very small part. The bigger part should be the emotions and feelings towards a piece. "Why did you write this?" I ask, and the reply might be vague or it might be exact. Either way, the process towards becoming a good writer who knows him/herself has started.

I don't feel that I can take full credit for my connectedness theory, however, because I owe most of my knowledge to Sheila, even though that was two and a half years ago already. I didn't know then that I would

become a reading and writing tutor, but I remember being incredibly impressed with how well Sheila understood me and my voice - how she was able to see that I was enjoying my writing experience and didn't stop me when the requirements were finished. She went home and spent her own time reading my work, dedicating her time to me. I found a connection with Sheila, and my goal is to find a similar connection with all of my learners. Not every learner is going to find who they are as I tutor her or him, but it is a possibility, one that I like to keep open to every learner that comes my way.

Similarly, not every learner is going to be like me, or like the learner I have now, but tutors can always try to evoke voice and emotion. Even now, as I am in a 357 course, I am able to find connections to my tutors even though I am already a pretty decent writer. Now that I have found my voice in my poetry and fiction, we are able to transcend that and my tutors are able to give me great feedback, but more importantly, friendship.

My tutors since Sheila have also been very open-minded when I wrote about my favorite things: destruction, death, sex, drugs, all of the sometimes grotesque things in life. They never shied away from me or my voice; they grew to respect me and who I was, forming that great connection. I try to do the same thing, and I have modeled all of my tutoring activities on that same tradition. As long as there is a mutual respect between the tutor and learner, nothing can come in the way of a good learning experience for both of them. E.M. Forster once said "only connect." That is all we really need to do as tutors and everything will come in time: the laughter, tears, emotions, voice, style, truths, and ultimately, the human being who knows who he or she is.

Going Beyond the Limitations

Andrea Casper

You were born with wings. Why prefer to crawl through life? ---Rumi

Limitation is a grasping word that can pull one down if allowed. We think we are limited in one thing or another, but the key word is "think." In tutorial sessions, many students come to us looking for answers, fresh ideas and confirmations. Many times they come with a limit already in mind. How do we help these students break the limits they have set for themselves? How do we get them to develop their ideas and not depend on ours? How do we help them make a transition from this dependency into feeling confident in their writing? Furthermore, how do we help them from going beyond the limitations the teacher has set? In the next few paragraphs, I'd like to explain how I feel we can break the limitations.

Donald Stewart says, "Some students become, in high school, very comfortable working in this hothouse environment" (414). By "hothouse environment," he means an environment where "[the] teacher assigns the topics, prescribes the organizational pattern, and, frequently creates an artificial context" (414). It is part of our duty to help students realize that in college, teachers want liveliness. As Stewart also puts it, ". . . voice is the most important. If I don't hear an authentic voice, I'm turned off. . . Nothing is less interesting to read than the dry, lifeless prose of technical report writers...[which] is difficult to read, become interested in, or follow" (414).

We need to get our learners beyond the point of writing for their teachers, and to the point where they can write for themselves while maintaining the teacher's assignment. Anne Gere states "Although they ask it in various ways, one of the students' most frequent questions is: 'What do you want?' They aim to please the teacher and want to make their writing conform to whatever the teacher wants" (401). She continues to explain how students should turn the question around, and find out what they want. We can encourage our learners to do this by challenging them. If we sense an idea is overdone, we can ask if that is truly how they feel. We need to express how important it is to develop our ideas and yet leave room for imagination.

We can help our learners build confidence in their writing by the word choice we use. We have to be very careful to stay within the lines of constructive criticism. However, although we need to stay within these lines, we need not limit ourselves. With creativity, there are many things we can do. Perhaps the most useful is not to offer your ideas. Rather, ask them how they think they can expand an idea. If they say "I don't know," make a mark there, and either come back to it later or tell the learner they'll have to work on it. This will show that they cannot rely on you for answers, but have to work just as hard as you are.

When we are in the booths, and even if we are tired, sick, or maybe even bored, we cannot give in and give the learner the answer. This may be the quick solution at the moment, but will only hurt the learner in the end.

As tutors, our main job is to help our learners expand or fully develop their ideas. We are there to offer our knowledge, and not intrude on the learner's ideas, not to dominate them but rather walk with them in their expansion of ideas. We need to offer our support but let the student know it is **their** paper and hence needs to be **their** ideas.

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Poetic Advice: A Tutor's Enchiridion

Meghan Caylor

So, it's your first time in the booth. You feel calm, pretty confident, and ready for anything, when, suddenly, you are introduced to a tutor's foe-subjective writing, where opinion is key, and the learner is relying upon you to give qualified advice on none other than poetry.

Sure, you've dabbled a bit in poetry, read pieces of Dickinson or Langston Hughes, but how do you go about giving proper advice so that people are not offended, or give the right direction if they just don't know the direction in which to turn? The answer to that question of how to go about giving advice on poetry lies in the focus of what good writing does: it conveys the human condition and spirit.

As a tutor, although reading and writing are key elements of your job, the main components are empathy and flexibility. First of all, it is probably good to remember that creative writing is the learning of people's very intimate thoughts and details. There is a place writing goes that no other discipline can touch, and this has to do with the quality of the spirit. While some may claim to write for their own pleasure, many wish to make the reader feel a certain emotion.

However, there will be instances where you may get individuals who think good poetry is abstract and difficult to understand. I had a learner in the booth who wrote a very ambiguous piece of poetry. He made very personal references and used vague symbolism. We went through the piece, and I had to read it through two times. I then had him break it up into small parts so I could get the message. It was not that he had written bad poetry. He simply accommodated to the language of him and his friends, that was intertwined in both their love of nature (I knew nothing of the names of plants he gave) and admiration for seemingly deep material. When asked what he wished to convey to the reader, my learner replied that the audience of his poem is his friends, and it is not meant for everyone to understand. He has to work to understand what is considered good poetry, so he thinks others should have to work hard to understand his as well. There was really not much I could do, besides offer some word changes and comment on the effectiveness of what I felt to be great word flow at times.

As a poet myself, I remember the time when I felt good poetry had to examine the meaning of life and leave others guessing what the true deeper meaning was. After some very effective coaching in high school and more well-rounded poetry in college (I graduated past the Hallmark Stores), I found that good poetry is clear and descriptive, and conveys an emotion, even if that very concept is simple.

I have developed a list of some tips for poetry ideas (for those with writers block) and feedback ideas (for us tutors!) that I have found helpful in both reading and writing poetry.

If the learner does not know where to begin, offer these types of brainstorming strategies to "get the ink out":

- 1) Write down what your writer's block feels like, even if it is a few short scratches, or a jumbly whirl of lines. From this outpour, tell me what emotion, idea, or conflict you can use in your writing. Look at it from all angles, and I am sure you can come up with something!

2) Write about an emotion- with one catch: there is no using emotion or feeling words. Rely on your surroundings and thoughts to portray how you feel.

3) Write in stream of consciousness. For five or ten minutes, write down everything you are thinking. Try hard not to pause or pick up the writing utensil.

4) Take a walk around the TLC to see what people, items, or happenings can spark inspiration.

What if your learner is sticking to one method of poetry? The first thing to be aware of is that this is probably his/her comfort zone. Give a lot of praise, and point out the strong points of their piece. Explain the benefits of experimentation. These are only several ideas, so feel free to add your own.

1) A dialogue poem. Write a conversation between two people discussing

- a. An issue neither agrees upon
- b. An issue both agree upon
- c. An issue that one person has no clue about

2) A letter poem. Have the learner write to a friend, favorite place, or idea.

a. Talk about the emotion he/she wishes to convey, and how this can be accomplished through the "letter"

3) A shape poem. Have the learner write a concept whose words can be made into a shape. This is more of a light-hearted activity, so you may use it when burn out is high.

4) A fragment poem. The learner is not allowed to use any complete sentences, just erratic thoughts or uncompleted ideas.

5) A perspective poem. Give the learner a perspective from which to watch a scene of

- a. A mother who gave her child up for adoption, watching children play on a playground
- b. A young girl in love watching her parents argue
- c. A father who lost his son in war, watching a graduation ceremony (or any other rite of passage in youth)

These are just a few of the ideas you can try with your learner to spark writing ideas. Most of all, remember what you have to offer. There is a reason each and every one of you was chosen to be a tutor in the TLC, so don't be afraid to bring about that quality and share it with each learner you encounter. Maybe the initials TLC actually stand for Takes a Little Confidence. As you embark upon your journey as a reading and writing tutor, may you always remember that what you have to offer supersedes any advice I could give, it's just a matter of believing you can do it.

Tutor Toolbox Excerpt

Kelly Deuser

My area of interest is revising and editing research papers. Often, learners who come in are overwhelmed with books and facts, unable to keep their thoughts straight long enough to write a draft. Those who have managed to produce a draft, commonly fill it in with lists of facts, or have left out the data needed to prove their statement altogether. The handbook I found useful was *The Scott Foresman Handbook for Writers*, 3rd ed., by Maxine Hairston and John J. Ruzkiewicz (p. 630-634). There are seven points made that I feel are important for revising research paper for yourself or for your learners.

1. Establish a relationship between the sources- this makes the information you have gathered into your own ideas. The research paper should not sound like a collaboration of book reports.
2. Address all counter arguments- this only strengthens your argument by showing the reader your knowledge of the subject matter and your confidence in our knowledge. Ignorance is the only explanation given to your reader for an unaddressed counter-argument, causing your audience to lose faith in you as an authority.
3. Keep the topic interesting- most research papers are based on studies. We all know that statistics and dry data are boring to read. To get, and keep, your reader's attention, put information in that is surprising or contradicts common knowledge.
4. Finish the essay in half the allotted time- leaving time to strengthen the argument and fill gaps in the data. Research is always the hardest when looking for a specific statistic or to fit the point being made. It is also difficult when you have exhausted all local resources. Remember, inter-library loans are not always the most efficient way to obtain sources. You may find that in the time left, you can add an interview of a local "expert" in the field.
5. Read critically- this is especially important as a tutor. You do not want to come in with any preconceptions or background information that may alter the learner's paper. For example, I had a learner who did a research paper on diabetes. I have a major in biology with a minor in nutrition, so I have learned this material quite extensively. I had to ask her to clarify whether diabetes was a curable or not, after she had stated that it was not curable and later said that you could be "diabetes-free."
6. Tell where there is too much and too little information- too much information can be tied into keeping it interesting for a reader, as well as establishing a relationship between sources in that you want to formulate ideas, not list raw statistics. However, too little information is more damaging. Not enough information can lead your audience to believe that you either do not know your subject matter, you cannot prove the point you wanted to make, so rebuttals are not made in defense of your position, or that you have not put forth the effort to work efficiently on this assignment.
7. Test the conclusion against the introduction- you may start your argument saying something like "the gray wolf should be removed from the federal endangered species act for the state of Wisconsin." Once you finish your paper, you may have found a tangent on that subject that was more appealing. Your paper is organized now, in such a manner, that your conclusion says, "The gray wolf is not a major predator of the whitetail deer in Wisconsin." By comparing the introduction to the conclusion you can start to analyze the flow of the paper and its pertinence to the topic you originally chose.

There are several ways to test the organization of a research paper. The first method involves underlining the main idea of each paragraph. Then read through the underlined sentences and see if they flow, and convey the

meaning that you are trying to get across. If they do not flow, try rearranging the paragraphs, or change the main idea of the paragraph(s) that stand out. The other way is to write the main points down on note cards and arrange them to develop the best organization; this works especially well when working with long reports, containing much data.

A few other points related to order are: all pages should be numbered including the title page. From the title page, there should be an outline, if required, and should be on its own page. The next page should be the abstract, again on a separate page. Then the body of the essay, and finally the work cited page. The inclusion of the outline and abstract, and the format of the title and work cited page vary between disciplines. When in doubt, check with the professor on the preferences. It is better to ask, and impress the teacher with your attention to detail than to get it wrong, and lose points.

Some Handy Dandy Tutoring Tips

Melissa Hintz

The question has been asked, "What makes a good tutor?" Every time I step foot in the booth, I try to find that next building block. I open myself up to the learner, as the learner entrusts a piece of himself or herself to me. Presenting a writing creation takes a great deal of courage, and with this knowledge we must have the utmost care for the learner.

The framework of the building process:

- It is always pleasant to be greeted with a smile. I don't know about you, but if I'm having a "bummer of a day," a nice smile is always welcome.
- One of the most important tools in tutoring is to make the learner feel at ease. Once I introduce myself to the learner, I try to open myself up to the learner by sharing stories, or asking how the week is going. The learner may connect with me on something and feel at ease enough to talk.

The core of the puzzle:

- A good tutor is one who carries out affective listening skills. A basic learning tool is to understand and listen to what the reader wants to improve on. You should always ask basic questions like, "Is there anything you want to work on?" "What did you have trouble with?"
- When reading someone's work, it is always effective to have the writer read his or her work out loud. If the learner is uncomfortable with reading out loud, the tutor should fill the void. Doing this will allow the learner to hear what his or her text sounds like in action. They can stop you if they hear something that is "off," and ask, "Did I really say that?" If you notice something amiss, you can stop the reading process and point out whatever doesn't sound right.
- You should always read the writing carefully. Is the core or heart of the paper captured? What does the writer need to add? Your main focus should always be on the ideas presented in the paper. There should be logic in the way the paper is presented.
- After reading a piece of writing, it is always important to point out the positive points in the paper. Do not just make something up either. Be honest. Point out images or words that are unique and interesting. What pictures seem to stick in your mind?
- A tutor should never just edit the paper. The tutor is there to **give feedback** to another writer. You are present as a reader, resource, and mend, who does not evaluate. Content and ideas are more important than grammar.
- If you catch **grammar** mistakes, don't take pen to paper and slash through with red. Find a grammar problem, point it out, and show the learner several alternatives to the problem. After they understand what they've done wrong, have them find similar mistakes in the paper. This way, they are doing their own correcting.
- You should always **be sincere and honest**. If something catches your eye, and you think that it needs improvement, don't walk around the issue. Be direct, but sincere about what you think needs help.

Those final few missing pieces:

- When you're working with an **ESL student**, find out what kind of a paper they're writing. Ask them where they are from. This can provide a basis for opening up, and add some insight to the paper. Once you've read the paper, preferably out loud, make sure everything is homogenous with the topic. Find areas that need grammar improvements, and back up your suggestions with solid reasons from a handbook. Often times, seeing things in writing will make your suggestions more "believable."
- If you're working with an **English '57 student**, and writer's block seems to be looming overhead, it is often handy to use "in-class" writing prompts to develop some ideas. In one case, the learner and I chose a word and wrote down all the ideas, sounds, and images relating to the word. We then compared what we had written down. This was very helpful in the development of ideas for future poems and essays.
- **Handouts and handbooks** are another great source of ideas. For instance, if you get a learner who uses some very bland adjectives or verbs, there are some "action-centered" word lists in the poetry drawer. A poem of bland flavor can come out "hot and spicy" with just a few changes of words. Some writing handbooks, like Poem Crazy, have helpful writing exercises to get your mind flowing.
- **Log sheets** are a great way to reflect on what you and your learner have done during the session. You should write a brief summary about what happened in the paper. What worked well in the paper? What did you and your learner work on? If you had suggestions as to what could "spruce" the paper up, include these. Logs are good reminders as to what you did, and they provide a brief history for future tutors.
- Not every learner will be willing and ready to take on the world. For those difficult few, you must open yourself up, and have some patience. Try to empathize. These may be students who've never had to ask for help, or they may be there because a professor forced them to go to the TLC. Whatever the case, ask questions and paraphrase. Bring out those handy listening tools.
- Try to ask a learner if you can write on their paper before you dive in. Writing is very personal, and this may be their final draft. You wouldn't want somebody to come in and start drawing on a paper you're about to hand in.
- Be aware of the author's voice in the paper. Writing is not just print on a sheet of paper. Writing can be an emotional outlet. When a learner brings in some writing, maybe this is their first time opening up about a personal experience. Be aware of these feelings, especially in poetry, and treat them as open sores. Don't attack their writing. Make sure the learner feels comfortable. Maybe you can relate to them. If the learner feels at ease they'll open up and talk about their writing.
- The tutoring booth is not a gossip shop. If you've had a bad experience with the same professor a learner has, don't be judgmental. Don't go off on tangents like, "Have I got a story about that jerk." This is the last thing a learner needs. Use your knowledge to help the learner achieve a paper of satisfaction. Tell the learner what kind of writing the professor looks for.
- One-half an hour seems more like five minutes. Try to focus on large specific problems rather than small grammatical mistakes. Often times I feel my perfectionism take control. I want to help the learner with everything, but sometimes this is not possible. If more time is needed, have the learner schedule another appointment with either you or another tutor. Be a careful reader, and don't just "blast" through the piece.

Remember that learning is a continual building process. These thoughts are simply a few "tools of the trade" that I have collected over this semester. Being a tutor requires a certain amount of empathy and patience that can only be gained through experience in the booth. You will not only learn about basic tutoring skills, but you will learn a lot more about yourself as a person. Don't worry; if you've established a solid structure, the building will be stable.

The Quiet Worrier's Enchiridion

Jamie Rothfuss

Don't Worry!

"Worrying doesn't help anything."

This is my "momtra." My mother told me this years ago, and I have repeated it a thousand times since. It serves as my mantra in times of nervousness, apprehension, and sheer panic. Although it's not in any tutoring handbook I've seen so far, this phrase has been one of the most helpful things for me as a tutor.

Ask Questions!

"If you don't know something, you can always ask somebody."

My mother is also responsible for this strategy. I never asked questions in school until my mother suggested this to me when I was in high school. Since then, I have learned more by asking questions than I have from many books, even college texts. People are amazing resources, and our Tutoring Learning Center has an abundance of amazing resources. Use them.

I guarantee that the less you worry, and the more you ask questions, the more comfortable and productive you will be as a tutor. There is no reason to worry, and there are even fewer reasons not to ask questions. The following are three general lessons that I have learned in my early tutoring sessions when I didn't know the first thing about tutoring. I learned them by breaking my own rules, and I'm offering them in hopes that you may learn these lessons vicariously, and with less discomfort than I did. Really, don't worry. Everything is going to be all right. Ask anybody in the TLC.

One of the first things I learned is that beginning tutors have more to offer learners than they think they do. However, the first time you find yourself in the booth with a learner who has a paper that needs serious structural help, you may not know where to start, and you may not feel like you know what you're doing. This segment is about how I reacted in my first such session, and how I learned my first important lesson: Don't worry about not immediately knowing how to help a learner fix their disorganized paper.

Jamie worries about how to help a learner fix their disorganized paper.

His paper was so scattered I didn't even know where to start. At my suggestion, he read it aloud, and by the time he finished, my head was spinning. The spinning had little to do with the paper's structural problems and everything to do with my worrying about whether I was going to be of any assistance. How was I supposed to help him fix this? Where was I supposed to begin? I broke my own first rule: I panicked. I thought for sure I could not help him. I was petrified.

This was my second tutoring session, and my first session working with someone on an actual paper. Since then, helping someone with a disorganized paper is probably the most common situation I have encountered in the booth, and that's why I'm including it. Over the course of several disorganized papers, I have formed a rough

yet generally effective set of steps to get learners thinking about how to organize their writing. I hope you find these steps useful.

Step One: Don't worry. It won't make anything better.

Step Two: Ask them what their main topic is, and have them write it down. If this is difficult for them, it is likely partiality to blame for the paper's poor arrangement. Remind them that whatever they put in the paper should somehow relate to that main topic.

Step Three: Once you have established their main topic, ask them what their subtopics are. For example, if their topic is wrestling, they may have written about scoring, methods, and uniforms. If you think it will help, have them write down their subtopics under their main topic. Again, this may be difficult for them, so you may need to prompt them a bit. However, do not do their thinking for them. If you can't stand the silence, go to the bathroom while they think about it.

Step Four: This step depends on how confused their writing is. If it is very poor, I would have them go through their paper, and put each sentence under the appropriate subtopic. For example, using the subtopics above, a sentence that reads "A wrestler must pin their opponent for 3 seconds," belongs in the rules subtopic.

Step Five: Work with your learner to arrange the sentences under their individual subtopics in a way that makes sense and is easy to follow. Using the wrestling rules example, the sentence "There are several important rules in wrestling that are the most important" should come before the specific rules. (I have done this step with my own papers by cutting out strips paper with my sentences on them, and taping them in the right order on another sheet of paper. If you feel this might help, try it.)

Step Six: Make some paragraphs with them. This is good practice for your learner to recognize the relationships between their ideas, and why they should be organized a certain way. For some learners, I've found that initially putting topic sentences at the beginning of the paragraphs helps them learn to organize paragraphs. However, you can certainly show them other ways of arranging the paragraphs around their topic sentences to give them more options once organization starts to come more naturally to them

Step Seven: Tell your learner that they've done a good job. For good writers, words will many times just appear on the paper already organized. This is not the case for most people. For many people (including tutors), organizing and reorganizing thoughts once they are down on paper is very hard work. Once it's on paper, some learners won't want to go through these steps because they just want to hand it in and get it over with. If that's the case, respect that. However, when someone goes through the above process, it shows a lot of concern and effort on their part to do well, and they should be commended for that. Since you are their tutor, you get the first chance to pat your learner on the back; don't be afraid to do so.

I've found that these steps can be a good starting point for unorganized writers because it gives them clear steps to follow to make sense of the clump of ideas that is their paper. Most people know when their papers aren't organized well (as one of my learners once said, "I know-it jumps around"); they just don't know how to fix it. If you don't have time to do all this in one session, send them home with these ideas. This homework-type approach keeps them thinking about their assignment, and will make sure they understand the concepts.

There are certain practices that are good to use in all tutoring sessions. I learned one of these in my first

session. Actually, I didn't learn for it a few days after the session. The lesson was this: don't take a learner's rejection too personally.

Jamie takes a learner's rejection way too personally.

My first English '57 learner was also my very first tutoring session. She had brought in a short story that was based on her and her friends' actual experiences. Again, I broke my cardinal rule, and panicked. I have never written fiction, I don't currently write fiction, and I don't see myself writing fiction anytime in the near future, so how could I possibly help this learner with her story? What made things worse is that when she asked me about stories I had written, I admitted my fiction deficit to her. She asked if my deficit was going to be a problem. I assured her it would not be, and we moved on.

It turns out that I surprised myself. I gave some pretty good suggestions based on what she told me she wanted her story to be like and fiction devices that I had learned about. I was proud. I was brilliant. I felt great. I had simultaneously conquered my worries and helped a learner. Life was good.

She dumped me. Right before our next session, she requested another tutor. I tried hard to figure out why. Did she think I was unqualified? Did she hate me? Did she think I was weird? I thought about this much longer than I should have, and every reason I came up with involved me being wrong, bad, stupid, mean, or generally unattractive.

The conclusion I eventually came to was this: It didn't matter why she wanted another tutor. For that half an hour, I tried my best to help her develop her writing. I listened carefully, was not forceful, and complemented her writing. I gave some good suggestions, kept her intentions a priority, and was genuinely interested in the development of her project. This is what being a tutor is all about. Perhaps I wasn't so bad after all.

Learners may reject you, your suggestions, and your opinions. My belief is that if you are caring, interested, and as helpful as you can be in the booth, you are probably a good tutor; the rest is up to the learner.

Jamie asks questions.

The final item I want to address involves my rule of asking questions. I have learned so many things by knocking on the doors of the senior staff members I could write a small book. Instead, I've decided to include a non-exhaustive list of items that I have learned from the TLC staff, so that you may reserve your questions for other matters.

1. No, you cannot use the copier if it's not for TLC-related material.
2. Yes, you may help a learner on a take-home exam, but beware of changing a lot of content. Ask someone if you think you may be crossing the line.
3. Yes, you can use the microwave.
4. Yes, you may go over your half-hour scheduled session time, but remember to write the date down twice in the log.
5. No, writing from other classes does not count toward your English '57 learner's writing requirement, but...
6. Yes, you can help them with other materials in addition to whatever they bring in for their '57 requirement.
7. No, you may not use the stove.
8. No, we do not report plagiarism to a learner's professor; rather, we advise them not to plagiarize.

9. No, you cannot check out the books from the TLC, but you can only use them while you're there.

10. No, you do not re-file your learner's folders after you're done. You put them in the left "folder holder" at tutor central.

I hope these tidbits of mine are helpful to you. I have learned an incredible amount in an incredibly small period of time in the TLC. In fact, every time I walk in, someone enlightens me whether I ask for it or not.

I know there are many topics I haven't touched on, and you likely have questions left unanswered. Don't worry. Everything is going to be all right. You can ask anyone in the TLC.

Learning Styles

Leah Buysse

Ever since my first experience with the Tutoring/Learning Center at the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, I have wondered about the impact of learning styles on students. This whole thought process started about a year and half ago when I was a learner. I was having trouble in my Religious Studies course. More specifically, no matter how hard I tried I was unable to receive anything higher than a "C" on my papers. I finally decided to ask the Tutoring/Learning Center to help me find a tutor. I felt awful about having to get help. I was an "A-/B+" student. I never before received a Cc" on a paper. Why was I having so much trouble in this class? Lack of interest, time of day, length of class, and classroom surroundings were no different for this class than they were for some of my other classes that I did well in. Then what was the difference? I concluded that it was the professor's teaching style and my learning style that made the class difficult for the both of us. I had never had a professor quite like my Religious Studies professor. He based the class on lecture only and his lectures tended to be auditorally based. There were no visual cues to help me learn the information. I was completely lost. Not only were the lectures difficult for me to learn from, but the style of papers he wanted were nothing close to the style that I usually write. There is one theme that seems to run through my writing experiences: I usually write with a lot of emotion. I let it be known to my reader how I feel and what I think about the themes of my writing. Needless to say, that was not the style my Religious Studies professor used or accepted from his students. I had a challenge before me--how was I going to accept and deal with the challenge?

My personal challenge has not been the only one that I have come across while working in the Tutoring/Learning Center. I have found obstacles as a tutor, many of which have to do with learning styles - at least in my opinion. There are three sessions in particular that stand out as having to do with a conflict of the professor's teaching style and the student's learning style. (The names have been changed to ensure the privacy of the learners.)

This history of obstacles as a result of learning styles showed itself very early in my tutoring experience. JR was a student who was having trouble retaining almost all of the information from his history lecture. He would read his book and retain a great amount of the information but the professor would focus the test on the lectures more than the book readings. JR was an "A" student and felt that he should be doing that well in history, too. During our first tutoring session, I attempted to help him by re-explaining everything that the professor had said. I left the session thinking that I was never going to make a decent tutor because JR left even more frustrated and lost than when he came in. I knew that I had to think of something and just hoped that he would come back and give the TLC one more shot.

Karen was another learner who came to the TLC for help in her German 101 class. She was working for her Bachelor of Arts degree and had to take two years of a foreign language to finish her degree. She had put the semesters of language off until the last minute because she had a lot of trouble learning her vocabulary. I learned in our first session that flashcards did not help and that even when she wrote them out constantly she was unable to retain the information. Again her learning style was posing a problem in the classroom. The professor did a limited amount of verbal explanation and would rely more on worksheets and overheads. Much of the class time was spent in quiet study of the terms and ideas.

Sue, a friend who lived down the hall, had a lot of trouble writing her papers for any class. She did well

on most of her other homework but was unable to make herself sit and write her papers. She told me that she was unable to think while sitting in front of a computer screen. She explained to me that she had tried the TLC to help her with her papers but that the booths were too small and it bothered her that she had to sit still and try to discuss what her paper would be about. This fact aroused my curiosity because Sue and I would always take walks and discuss a wide variety of issues. What would cause her to have trouble discussing ideas in the TLC?

How could I, as a tutor, help these students succeed in their most difficult classes? All of them came and asked for help on their own, which means that they wanted to improve. So motivation was not the problem. The difficulty was understanding. I decided that the best way to help the learners I worked with was to take the information they had to learn and teach it to them in a way they would understand. I was going to teach them using the strengths they already possessed. The strengths of the students could be found by using the information I had acquired about learning styles. Longman and Atkinson state that "when you study or think in ways that match your (learning) style preferences, you learn more effectively" (7).

I suppose an explanation would be good right about now. To me, a learning style can be defined as a process by which one learns a given set of information. Wahlstrom and Williams agree by defining learning styles as "the ways in which people acquire knowledge" (97). Each process reaches the end result, which is learning the particular set of information, but as the word "process" suggests each learning style has its own set of instructions or set steps towards reaching the end result. There are many different processes to take part in but most of them can be categorized into four main learning style types: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactual.

Visual learners, as the name suggests, learn by looking at materials. They rely on sight. They like to mind map, sketch, organize by writing, learn by reading, and love any information that can be given in hard copy. They tend to stare into space and visualize when contemplating ideas (Orr).

Auditory learners pick up most of their information by listening to sounds around them. They dislike reading and when they do read they tend to read information out loud so that they can hear it. They tend to be very talkative and enjoy participating in discussions. Lecture classes work well for them (Orr).

Kinesthetic learners pay the most attention gross motor skills or physical involvement. They like to move around and tend to think better when they do. They also do well in discussions because the surroundings allow for more movement. They have poor listening skills and tend to have difficulty in lecture classes, whether they are visually or auditorally based (Orr).

Tactual learners are the last group that needs to be discussed. They are very closely related to the kinesthetic learners. They too like movement but it is more manipulation than the physical movement. They like to use the sense of touch to understand. Tactual learners also tend to be very emotional. They tie emotion and feeling into everything they learn. They remember by how they felt (Orr).

Because of how different the four learning styles are, teachers and students, tutors and learners all have to learn how to work with the other styles. We must all understand the similarities and the differences, the strengths and the weaknesses, and the actions that accompany each style. I feel that the misunderstanding of different styles is what causes very intelligent students to have trouble in a certain type of classroom and with a certain style of teaching. It is the tutor's job to find that ravine of misunderstandings and build a bridge connecting the different styles. The way that this can be done is by working with the information from the professor and the

strengths of the students. I realized this by solving the problems I was faced with by two of the students mentioned above. The third student did not necessarily need a bridge but she needed to have someone let her know where her strength was. She had never heard of learning styles. There was an answer to each, and I found the answers by paying attention to learning styles.

To continue the first story, JR did return to the TLC and give me another shot at trying to help him in his history class. The difference between the second session and the first was that I was prepared. I had had a week to figure out the best way to help JR remember and organize the history facts. I greeted JR with a smile and a large timeline. The timeline consisted of as many dates as I could remember from our first conversation. JR and I began at the beginning of the timeline and discussed every event that I included and even some that I had forgotten. By the end of the hour session JR had remembered and connected all of the different events that were represented on the timeline. You see, JR was a very visual learner and I had picked this up in our conversation because he had mentioned that he was very good at remembering facts from the books because of the pictures and graphs that accompanied the words. He had also mentioned that he tends to get side tracked when taking notes. When I looked at his notes I saw that that was true but I also noticed that he did not just check out of the lectures, he was drawing things in his surroundings. I concluded that he was a visual mind in a very auditory classroom.

Karen, on the other hand, was the complete opposite of JR. She was having difficulties memorizing her vocabulary words using flash cards and the worksheets provided by her professor. This was later in my tutoring experience so I was able to ask the right questions in the first session and realized that she was an auditory learner in a visual surrounding. I reached this conclusion by asking questions about her classroom. Where she sits? How the professor lectures or teaches? What distracts her from doing the assignments? I also asked about how she studies for her other classes in her major or minor. All of these questions helped me gather information on what might work. I asked her to come back to another session and told her that I would have something to try next week. I decided that since she was an auditory learner, discussing the new vocabulary might be the best way for her to learn them. But I was still at a loss to how to do it. Just discussing the words and saying them out loud was not going to work. I decided to come up with funny sayings for some of the new vocabulary so that she would have something in the conversation to remember. I also thought that the funny sayings would ease some of the anxiety that she was feeling toward the class and the TLC. Needless to say, the strategy worked. She came in the next week and I introduced her to her new study style. I had, like I said earlier, written some of the memory devices. The rest we did together. It was one of the best sessions I have ever had. We laughed the whole time and the next vocabulary quiz showed major improvement. Her only problem was that she kept laughing during the test.

My last example of how learning styles affect students does not have to do directly with the auditory or visual style. Sue was not having a conflict with any certain teaching or learning style. She just did not understand her own learning style for paper writing. If you recall, she is the student who had been unable to write any of her papers sitting in front of the computer. This I understand because I do the same thing. I needed to find a way for her to feel like she was composing without having her stationary in front of a computer. I decided that the best way for Sue to compose her papers was to tape them. We had always done a lot of composing on our long walks. Now I would make sure that the "walk talks" (as we liked to call them) would have a certain theme. We would discuss the topic for her next paper. I attempted to ask questions that would help her organize her ideas and compose the paper almost completely before she even sat down in front of a computer. It worked. The movement of the walk helped her think. She was able to use her kinesthetic strengths to write her college papers.

Each of the three students above was helped by the knowledge of learning styles. They were each able, with the help of an outside source, to build those bridges of understanding that they needed to succeed in a

challenging situation. That is why I believe that tutors should have knowledge of learning styles. I may even go as far as to say tutors should take the time to learn how to work in all of the styles. According to Wahlstrom and Williams, a person can have a "mixed modality learning style." This means that the tutor is then able to function almost equally in all styles (IOO). Along with working in each style, tutors should be able to make suggestions according to the characteristics they see in each one of their learners. Knowledge of their own styles helps because many of the misunderstandings would then be bypassed. They will be able to connect with the learner on learners' terms and the tutor will be able to harness the strengths that are present in every tutoring situation. Longman and Atkinson wrap it up the best when they explain that once students "understand style and modify learning tasks to incorporate style they will maximize learning" (3).

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Tutoring - Schwarzenegger Style

Amanda Meidl

Cory sat at the table with me in Practicum class all semester. He'd good-naturedly make fun of me and the strange, random things that I'd say month after month. He informed me that I do the worst Arnold Schwarzenegger impression he's ever seen. He's probably right. But the imagery is all that concerns me...even with a bad Austrian accent, he still got the idea. "So sit back and listen to my story about the things I have learned about tutoring." (*Yeah, you were supposed to be imagining Arnold's accent just then.*)

My tutoring experience this semester has taken me on an interesting journey. Difficult at times, yes. Definitely. Sometimes, it seemed too difficult to manage. But - in true Schwarzenegger fashion, one must get tough and conquer whatever's waiting in the shadows. (*Okay Schwarzenegger buffs... honestly, I've never seen any Terminator movie and I think I've seen only one Schwarzenegger flick in my life, but the imagery works, I think. Stay with me.*) By getting tough and conquering my fears, my insecurities, and extreme challenges, I think that I've learned a lot about myself and have maybe (just maybe) helped others, too.

My very first tutoring session was the most memorable experience of the semester. I had an appointment with P--. I dutifully found her folder, checked my schedule, and made sure all her paperwork was in the purple '57 folder. I waited expectantly. Sitting near the front desk, I watched as a young woman approached the reception desk and began a discussion with the receptionist about her tutoring session. I thought I heard the young woman say P--. I wondered if that was my appointment... my very first tutoring session. I moved closer to the desk and quietly asked, "Are you P--?" The woman curtly nodded to me. I took the opportunity to introduce myself. She responded with an icy sneer, "Yeah, well... I figured as much since you came over to talk to me." Oye. This was not going to be an easy first experience. I'm sure she's just a little flustered. Maybe she feels a little out of place, I rationed.

We took a seat in the "Cowboy Booth" and looked at her '57 folder. I noticed that she chose to write three sets of 4 poems. That's cool, I thought. Poems. I like poetry. This is going to be neat. I tried to make a little small talk with P-- and let her know I was excited to be working with her. She just sat there and stared at me, like I had horns growing out of my head or I had sprouted an extra nose. Okay, I thought. Let's just move on to the work. Maybe she's just really motivated and wants to get right to it. I asked her if she had brought any poetry with her. She said she did and produced it. "It's only handwritten," she mumbled. "That's totally fine!" I replied. "Let's have a look." It was a fairly short, free-form poem. It was good... full of detail, with a strong, vibrant ending. I told her so. Not even a tiny smile or any recollection that she had even understood what I had just said. No response... none. We talked (or I talked) about the expectations of the course and about what types of things she wanted to work on. No response, not even to my most direct questions. The only thing I was able to extract from her was that she mostly wrote free-form poems right now. I asked her if it would be okay if she brought in a revised copy of her current poem and another draft of a different poem. She mumbled, "Okay." I told her I would take a look at different forms and types of poetry and maybe we could experiment with other forms together.

"Okay," she mumbled.

I couldn't believe it, but our time was actually up. I remained cheerful (even though I felt like crying my eyes out) and told her I was looking forward to our next visit... even though I was secretly hoping the ground would swallow me up and I'd never have to tutor again. I thought I was worthless. A terrible tutor.

A stupid idiot who was not cut out for this. I was dreading my next session with P--. I had another '57 learner come in the following day for a tutoring session and she was congenial and very easy to work with.

But still—my spirits were down. I had to face P-- again next week.

My next session with P-- was almost as bad as the first. A tiny piece of writing to work with (although *very* well written) and not so much as a peep from the learner. More icy stares. One of my instructors stopped by the booth to share some information with me and commented to me after the session that she suspected I had a genuine challenge on my hands. I asked if I was doing something wrong. She told me I wasn't. She told me I was exuding warmth and was doing just fine. Well, that took a little pressure off. So I didn't really have something sprouting from my head, even if P-- kept looking at me as if I did. I'm doing okay. That was a big step for me to admit that I was trying and doing okay. My instructor asked me if I wanted to give the learner over to a more experienced tutor or if a senior staff member should take over for a session. At that point, I made a decision. I told my instructor that I'd give it one more shot and then we could sit down and talk it over. I was doing okay. So I wasn't gonna let P-- win... not like this. Time to get tough. Schwarzenegger tough. "Oh, yah."

Third meeting with P--. It was a "make or break" scenario in my mind. If she continued to be rude, nearly completely silent and icy this time, I just didn't think I would be able to get through the rest of the semester. It wouldn't do either of us any good, I decided. The time had arrived. Showtime.

P-- walked in, sour as ever. "Damn," I thought. "Let's do this." I felt like I was getting ready to stand up to the school bully. I remained warm, cheerful, and professional while we made our way over to the booth.

But inside, I felt like Arnold Schwarzenegger... tough, man, real tough. I was careful not to be too chipper for fear of appearing condescending. I asked her if she brought in a poem for us to look at today. She barely looked at me and responded with a poisonous tone that she wouldn't have come in today if she didn't have anything written. Yikes... okay. Still icier than ever, eh P--? I told myself not to give up. Think Schwarzenegger, I told myself. She produced a list poem out of her folder and we read it. Surprisingly, it was quite witty and charming. I told her I was kind of having a rough day (even though I really wasn't) and that it was nice to read something that brought a smile to my face. She replied (with extra ice) that it was good that she didn't bring in something dark. I softly chuckled and told her that would've been okay, too. I told her it would have fostered my dark, brooding, artistic side. I'm not going to let you win, I thought. We talked a little about what she liked to write about. She *actually* engaged in a conversation with me. She sort of let on that she hasn't really brought in anything that reflected her "true" voice because she didn't think I would like it. I told her that I liked lots of different things and am very open-minded. I told her I love art and poetry and that writing - any kind of creative writing - *is* an art. I told her to do it... bring something in... try to shock me. I thought to myself, "Yah - dat's right." Peek over that wall. It's okay. I won't judge you. Let's write and be creative and have some fun. She was quiet for a few moments and asked to see the poetry forms book again. Right on! I eagerly ran for the forms book and brought it back to her. No smile yet, but man! *She was talking to me*. Sometimes she would say some very rude things, but what an improvement! I just let the comments roll off my ducky little back and kept her talking.

She poured over the forms book and saw the sections on songs. She looked at me (yep, looked at *me*) and asked if she could write some song lyrics. Right on, I replied. Do it! She almost cracked a smile. She asked me if she could use a few words from a foreign language in her poetry. Yes, I responded. I asked her about her language background and she prattled on for a few moments. I was practically bursting at the seams. Our time was up, so we chatted a bit about what she would be working on for the next session. I said good-bye and

she just walked away without responding. "Hasta la vista, baby!" You made progress today, P--. I'm not your enemy. I'm just your tutor. I fairly skipped into my instructor's office to tell her the "make or break" session was a make. Definitely a "make." In my head, I was so tough - like Schwarzenegger, man.

After that last session with P--, I found myself anticipating the next appointment with mixed feelings. Although we'd made a lot of progress, I was still sort of dreading our next meeting. It took *a lot* of energy to get her to contribute, and she was still so rude. Buck up Schwarzenegger, I told myself. This is what you're here for. The really rewarding, important stuff is *never* easy. It'll make you a better tutor and a better person. It will be a growing experience. "Okay, yah...let's get dis shindig staarted."

I then asked her how her sonnet was going... She had been working on a sonnet last week to bring in, but I had yet to see it. She said she scrapped her first draft and was starting over. Disappointed that she never shared her first sonnet with me, I asked her about the new draft and if she was having problems with it. She let on that she was still really unsure about her ability to write sonnets. I gently encouraged her to bring in a draft, even if it wasn't finished or she wasn't happy with it.

We still had some time left and I asked her what she would like to do with the remaining time. She asked me if we could do a poetry exercise together. I nearly fell off my chair. I went to the file cabinet to find an appropriate exercise to do with her. I came back with a "Do you see what I see?" exercise and we looked over the details together. It took us forever to decide on a topic to write about. Everything I suggested, she didn't like. So I told her to decide. And I sat in silence forever (I know it was only 30 seconds, but it felt like forever). She said she wanted to write about the cover of a puzzle box. I told her that was a great idea and we started writing. Then, we shared our writing. I made a joke about what I had written and she actually laughed. Holy cow! She was laughing with me! The mood in that booth actually got silly for a few moments. I could hardly believe it. I was close to hyperventilating... it felt so strange to be laughing with P--. Good. But so, so strange. Our time was up and I jokingly told her I wanted to see the sonnet. She laughed and said next time, her poem would be a surprise... she wasn't going to tell me what she was going to bring in. I told her that was fine and I would be looking forward to next week. She walked out with a short "good-bye." Wow - what a trip. I felt completely discombobulated.

Our next few sessions moved along. There were still challenges, but many improvements. P-- even shared with me in one of the sessions that she had won an award for a poem in high school and that she was working off of this piece to write her new sonnet. I encouraged her to bring in both the original piece and whatever she had on the new sonnet. Every week, I'd cross my fingers and hope that the poems would surface from her folder. Then, something kind of cool happened. P-- was scheduled to come in for her session on my birthday. And wouldn't you know, P-- brought in her old piece and her new sonnet. Happy Birthday, Amanda "Schwarzenegger." Both pieces were amazing. And I couldn't help it. No more Schwarzenegger. Not today anyway. I took a chance and told her how talented I thought she was as a writer. She let her guard down and told me she's really struggling this semester (her first semester in college!) and that she feels like she "sucks" as a writer. I told her I disagreed and that the voice she portrays in her writing and the subjects she writes about say a lot about who she is as a person. I told her it showed me that she's not afraid to think outside that preverbal box and that she's smart and witty and thinks really, really deep. I told her how exciting that was and how much these attitudes and writing styles would help her in her college career. She sheepishly told me that she hasn't decided on a major. The rest of the session was no longer about poetry. But that was okay. We were okay. I told her that freshman courses and General Degree Requirements were tough. But I told her to follow her instincts and take one class a semester, just one class that instinctively feels like a "guilty pleasure." If you dug that class, maybe you've found something you want to major in. Maybe not. Then take another "guilty pleasure" the following

semester... see where it leads you. She just stared at me. But not like before. Suddenly, that thing (whatever it was) was not sprouting from my head. She was just - I don't know - at a loss for words. I apologized for my sentimental outburst and blamed it on the fact that I was nearer to thirty than I was last year and maybe I was getting sappy in my old age. She told me no, I wasn't. She genuinely smiled at me. I could see she was still scared. That was okay. I just smiled back. I didn't really need to be Schwarzenegger anymore. The battle was won.

I learned so much from P--. I hoped she learned a little bit from me. She is a great writer... so very talented. I still feel miniscule in my writing abilities if I compare myself to her. *No way* can I write poems like she does. So what in the world was I doing tutoring her? *What in the world was I doing tutoring her?*

I don't know. I'm still trying to figure that one out.

It was the Best of Tutorials, It was the Worst of Tutorials

Sarah Wiltzius

Like so many other first time tutors before me, I sat petrified at the table; half hoping my learner wouldn't come. But he did, like most learners do. To add to my anxiety, I was informed that my learner was also an ESL student. More fears crept to the surface. Would I be able to explain things well? What if I didn't know what I was talking about? I wish I could write that I had the best learner ever, that we formed a lasting friendship and made huge progress on his writing style. Unfortunately, I cannot tell a lie.

My initial hour in the booth didn't go exactly as I had planned. "C" and I did not hit it off at all. A comfortable rhythm eluded us, and awkward moments were as frequent as a recurring nightmare. I didn't, however, underestimate the challenge of tutoring an ESL student. Not only do you have to worry about communicating difficult grammar and structure comments, but in some situations communicating simple terms is difficult enough. The language barrier wasn't an easy hurdle to jump -and you could still cut the tension with a knife. While the first session was a little rocky, with the two of us getting to know each other and whatnot, I wasn't too discouraged. I certainly wasn't eager for the next week to roll around either.

The next week did roll around, just like it always does, and "C" was on time. He put his paper in front of me like he did the week before. But this time he whipped out his red pen. I may be a rookie, but I'm not stupid. I know there is no red pen editing in the booth. So, I counteracted his move with a brilliantly clever move of my own. I ignored the pen. To me it wasn't even there, but "C" kept mentioning how he wanted me to proofread his paper for grammar mistakes. We started to read through the paper and I tested him to see if he could identify his errors. From there I began to tackle some of the higher order concerns, such as transitions and sentence fluency. With *The Bedford Handbook* as my guide, I dove into explanations as to the importance of these two elements in writing, but he seemed bored. My dazzling display of knowledge didn't seem to penetrate "C"'s skull. My head was spinning with other methods to reach him. How else could I explain how to write an effective transition?

A trip to the file cabinet bought me some time to pull an astoundingly amazing strategy out of thin air. I thumbed through the folders and handouts, my mind racing. When I got back in the booth, I received a stern talking to. "C" was not pleased with the approach I was taking with him. He pushed his paper directly in front of me and again laid down that dreaded red pen. Much to his dismay, I refused to utilize the instrument he valued so highly. Most students would simply accept this and the ways of the TLC that I explained to him, but "C" was not the typical TLC learner. His volume elevated. His tone became stern and serious. This guy meant business. I tried to keep the most confident front I could. I did NOT want to let him think he was going to get me to crack. His criticisms of my tutoring cut me to the quick and being the emotional person I am; I wanted more than anything to curl into a ball, roll in the corner and cry.

My butt was glued to the chair and I fought the urge to flee the scene. I listened intently to everything "C" threw my direction and once again I railed against my natural instinct to throw it all back in his face. Instead, I calmly restated the purpose of the TLC and how our main goal is always to help students help themselves. As soon as "C" left, every muscle in my body relaxed and I started to shake from the sudden release of tension. Looking back on the situation, I'm glad I had Practicum immediately following this booth session. I sat through class in a daze, shell shocked that I had actually received a lecture in the booth. My mind was a whirlwind of thoughts and I

failed to link two phrases, much less write a coherent log. Only one thing was clear in my mind: I had to talk to Mo or Bobbie. As Practicum drew to a close, one question burned in my mind like a brand on a cow's rump: "Did I do the right thing?"

My discussion with Mo was very reassuring. Multiple times she told me I did everything exactly the way it was supposed to be done. I resisted the desire to drench his paper in red ink, addressed higher order concerns, and allowed "C" to unload his concerns without becoming outrageously defensive. While all these things permitted my heart to beat a little slower, I was still really apprehensive about future tutoring sessions. Deep down in my heart of hearts, I knew I didn't want to face "C" again.

Then, like game show a contestant, I was presented with three doors. Door number one opened to show Mo and/or Bobbie sitting "C" down for a discussion of TLC practices and the lack of red pen editing found in LRC 018. Door number two revealed Dr. Dietrich having a heart-to-heart with "C." Finally, we came to door number three. Behind this door I saw Cheryl reassigning "C" to another tutor. This was the door for me. As soon as Cheryl made the change official on the computer, I felt like a proverbial weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

Perhaps my horror story belongs around a camp fire instead of in a collection of tutoring testimonials. However, there is good news: that session with "C" was by far the worst one I had all semester, and, according to Bobbie and Mo, learners like "C" are as rare as digestible Debot dinners. I'd hate to leave you thinking that every learner will be a royal pain in your bottom, when that really isn't the case. To prove my point, I'd like to offer an example of a '57 learner that was the exact opposite of "C."

I was still nervous the day I met "B" for his first '57 tutorial, but I covered my fears with a big smile and firm handshake. I relaxed a little bit when he grinned back at me. In the booth, "B" and I hit it off like a homerun hitter and a good pitch. We were comfortable just shootin' the breeze about the weekend or classes or the weather whatever. By the end of the semester we had a rhythm. He would come into the TLC, I would grab his folder and off we'd go into the booth. He'd sit in front of the computer and print off his paper for that week and I'd ask him how his weekend was. We'd chat, he'd get his paper from the printer and we'd get down to business. We'd, of course, stray off topic once or twice during that half hour, but ultimately we were really productive.

I had one of my proudest moments with "B." It was about halfway through the semester and we had been working on the same gosh darn paper on Brett Favre the whole time. That week he brought in what he said was his penultimate draft. I leaned back in my chair and said, "How 'bout you read the whole thing to me?"

"Ok," he said. It was at that moment I witnessed my first booth miracle. I listened to "B"'s steady voice read his own writing and then it stopped. "Well that's not right," the voice said. Pencil hit paper and made the change. It happened again and again, at least four more times before he was done reading. My heart skipped a beat. I swallowed hard and began to grin like a Cheshire cat. I had done it! A wave of pure pride washed over me as my brain connected the dots of the spectacle before my eyes. I had taught "B" to recognize his own mistakes! I wanted to leap out of my chair and shout for joy. Once again I denied myself the pleasure of giving into my gut instinct. My recollection of the rest of the tutorial is quite poor since my brain was off doing a victory dance somewhere on cloud nine.

At this point I could cite a laundry list of lessons I've learned from these two very different tutorials, but I'm pretty sure you'd be snoring long before I reached the end. So, to save some trees, I've summed up all these lessons into two very important points. Number one: Don't hesitate to ask for help when you need it. The people

around you - supervisors, colleagues, family, friends and peers - are some of your most valuable resources.

Number two: Let your guard down in front of your learners. You'll both relax and each half hour tutorial will fly by.

Tutoring English as a Second Language

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As I am extremely interested in linguistics, the subject of learning language and all the processes which it entails fascinates me. I myself have studied French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Japanese. Learning these languages has been an enlightening experience. In this process, I have broadened my cultural literacy and developed a more profound understanding not only of grammar, language acquisition, and methods of learning, but also a better understanding of people. Recently, I began to teach French and to tutor reading and writing, particularly to students learning English as a second language. I find that my language background has helped tremendously to understand the process of language acquisition, as well as the personal concerns and issues which these students are dealing with. Moreover, through my experience in the tutoring practicum this semester, I have found that working with ESL students is fundamentally different than working with native speakers of English, and that these students have special needs, of which all tutors should make themselves aware.

While it remains equally important to establish an atmosphere of mutual respect between the tutor and the American learner, it requires even more effort on the tutor's part to establish and maintain this relationship with the ESL student. We must not forget the additional stress which foreign students may be experiencing, oftentimes living far from home, far away from friends, family, and everything familiar. The foreign student also incurs stress simply because of all the additional effort which he or she must make to express him- or herself in another language, unable to find the correct words, afraid of making mistakes, and afraid of offending. I was amazed to discover just how many foreign students are lacking self-confidence, even when their language skills are already quite advanced. The reading and writing tutor must be aware that all these additional factors play a role in student performance. For all these reasons, the tutor should make more effort to establish and maintain a comfortable atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

Once the tutor has set the tone for the meeting and created a comfortable atmosphere, I would like to point out yet another difference which he or she must consider when working with a non-American learner. The overall experience is simply not the same. Certain aspects of tutoring, such as clarifying the assignment, take on a new and greater importance when working with a foreign student. We as tutors often take for granted that the learner understands what is expected of him or her, but in the case of a foreign student, with all the cultural differences and possible language difficulties--or even barriers--we no longer can make these assumptions.

After the assignment has been clarified and both parties have a good understanding of what is expected, the tutor will be better equipped to assist the learner with his or her assignment. At this point, tutors must keep in mind that just as assisting individual American students may require a variety of approaches, so does working with foreign students. However, in the latter case, the approaches may vary even more, based upon the home country of the student and the nature of his or her native language. Above all, I must emphasize concentrating on the student's ideas, and when those ideas are not immediately clear, to have the patience and take the time to help the student translate his or her thoughts coherently into our standardized English. It should be our goal to help foreign students translate their meaningful thoughts into words and sentences on paper. During the ESL presentation in our practicum class, we tutors saw that we could not take this ability for granted. We experienced great difficulty expressing our thoughts and ideas on paper when only a few, minor grammatical constraints were placed upon us. We saw how frustrating it must be for the foreign students we work with, knowing that you have worthy ideas, yet are unable not convey them to others. Moreover, if American students ever complain about

suffering from "writer's block," imagine what the foreign student must be going through. Just as we may become caught up in crafting our sentences and concentrating on grammar, the conventions of our language will only serve to further impede the flow of ideas for an ESL student. For these reasons, I suggest that foreign students work initially without a dictionary, skipping any words they do not know, so that they may achieve a true "stream of consciousness." Peter Elbow asserts in his book, "Writing with Power," that we take our focus off spelling, grammar, rules, and the errors we make when trying to get our ideas down on paper (1981, p. 15). I have found this to be most beneficial in my own experience with learning languages. I know how frustrating and crippling it can be to work with a dictionary in hand. I also support Frank O'Hare's (1995) idea that multiple drafts are needed when writing. In this way, the focus is taken off of grammar, at least initially, so that the student has a better chance of expressing his or her thoughts and ideas.

Once the tutor has a sufficient understanding of these ideas, I have few reservations about correcting the student's grammar. Again, the tutor must remember how fundamentally different the needs of ESL students are. This doesn't necessarily mean that I do all the work myself. I try to find recurring errors, perhaps subject-verb agreement, and call it to the student's attention. I may go over several errors that the student made, giving them some kind of meaningful explanation, and then ask them to take a closer look at the rest of their paper, checking for similar errors. The essential here is to achieve a level of understanding as to why this is incorrect and what the student must do to make it grammatically correct. Sometimes, I ask students about their native languages, and, when possible, make comparisons between their structure and that of English. This serves to heighten the student's understanding of English grammar and reinforces his or her memory. Of course, I do not expect all tutors to be linguists *par excellence*, speaking seven different languages fluently; all I ask is that they remain open-minded and do not take on a judgmental, or worse yet, condescending attitude, believing that other languages are simpler or less sophisticated than our own.

In my own studies of foreign languages, I learned how to "read like a writer," as Frank Smith describes in his essay (1983, p. 558). I experienced a heightened level of consciousness, such as making mental notes of new vocabulary or taking the time to truly understand how a certain word or expression was used. In addition, I found myself paying particular attention to grammatical structure, verb tenses, etc. I believe that many of the foreign students, with whom I have worked, also learned how to "read like writers" as they advanced in their studies of English. However, for those ESL students who haven't had quite as many years of formal English instruction, I suggest the strategies which have worked for me in my own studies so that they, *too*, may become "members of the club." Smith explains that "for these students, it's really a matter of acquiring enough knowledge about the English language to be able to write. This requires much time, effort, and practice. We as tutors should understand that we had to go through the same process as children, accumulating enough knowledge about how our language functions and developing sense of the language in order to write the reports, short stories, or even notes and messages, which we today oftentimes do with little effort. Now that we are in possession of these writing skills, we need to understand that the foreign students we tutor are still in the process of acquiring them. Perhaps the worst possible statement we could make to an ESL student, who hasn't developed an ear for the language, is that what they have written "just doesn't sound right."

Finally, Smith asserts in his essay that children will take an interest in writing and begin to "read like writers" when they feel that this activity is something of which they are capable (1983, p. 565). This is equally true for the foreign student. If we encourage them, give them support, show them how they can transform a sentence into the style of a native speaker, and assure them that developing language skills takes time and *effort*, then they will feel as though this is a level which they can attain--that they may one day become "members of the club." After all, we tutors are nothing but more experienced members of this club, and moreover, we should serve on the

welcoming committee.

Works Cited

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