Dominance and Peer Tutoring Sessions with English Language Learners

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Abstract

In order to better understand the complex dynamic that often occurs during writing center sessions between native English speaking (L1) tutors and English language learners (ELL), this study investigates linguistic dominance through time-at-talk, turn-taking, agendasetting, and content analysis. We conclude that, in keeping with theory and practice of tutor training in inquiry-based pedagogy, ELL students and peer tutors vacillate between the linguistic dominant position, indicating that participants establish a collaborative and egalitarian environment. However, L1 tutors may experience dissonance because the agenda set by ELL students often focuses on surface features such as grammar and diction rather than on global revisions.

he Writing Center peer tutor reads a paper just presented to her, while the engineering student, whose first language is Mandarin Chinese, shifts uneasily in his seat across the small table. He nervously glances at the clock hanging on the cinder-block wall. An awkward silence hangs between them, and the anxiety becomes even more palpable as the tutor hesitantly offers a suggestion:

I think that's fairly straightforward, but you might want to, see I don't know. Mmmm, where is that part? I don't know if in something like this you're supposed to have a hypothesis that you state up front. I don't really know, but it might be helpful to say that this is your working hypothesis. This is what you think is gonna happen but you acknowledge that possibly it could be that. So, maybe make that more explicit that this is what you're thinking will happen and that you recognize that this is possible.

In this one simple example, the peer consultant reveals her uncertainty with

hedges like "might," "maybe," and "I don't know," a total of six times in six sentences. This typical short utterance illustrates the discomfort that often occurs in writing center sessions between consultants who are speakers of English as a first language, what we will designate as L1 speakers, and student clients who are non-native speakers learning English as a second --or tertiary--language. In the above example, the consultant responds to global issues, but in doing so uses linguistic hedges, perhaps because of her discomfort in dominating the focus of the session. Although she responds to global issues in the student's writing as she has been trained to do, he wants her to specifically address his grammar usage. His agenda for the session is different from hers, resulting in a clash of cultural preferences that complicates the communication process for both parties.

It comes as no surprise that, like the tutor excerpted above, writing tutors often feel apprehensive about giving direct advice for a student paper, especially when the students with whom they work depend on them as an authority figure, a rhetorical position that peer tutors try to minimize in order to create a more egalitarian space for collaboration within the tutoring session. It is common practice to train tutors using the inquirybased method, a strategy wherein the more experienced peer tutor asks relevant and probing questions that lead students to establish a topic, refocus their ideas, reorganize their evidence, rethink their claims, or make other changes to their work. The key is that the tutor, rather than directing specific changes, merely engages students in thought processes that help them work through their rhetorical decisions. Writing tutors are trained to facilitate rather than control the revision process and to help students with the process of writing rather than direct specific surface-level changes. However, English language learners are often, understandably, preoccupied with correcting surface features of writing such as grammar and diction. To further complicate matters, ELL students often come to the writing center with a heightened view of the tutor as an authority figure because international models of education usually emphasize the authority of teachers and tutors (Powers, 1993a, 1993b; Wiegle & Nelson, 2004; Bell & Youmans, 2006).

In "Rethinking Writing Center Conferencing Strategies for the ESL Writer" (1993b), Judith Powers asserts that "collaborative techniques depend so heavily on shared assumptions or patterns, conferences that attempt to merely take the techniques we use with L1 writers and apply them to ELL writers may fail to assist writers we intend to help" (p. 93). This assertion underpins this research project, hinting at the reason for the tutor's uncertainty in ELL consultations and highlighting potential imbalances and concerns with the practice of collaboration within ELL sessions. When tutors rely on the patterns they establish when working with L1 writers, superimposing similar strategies in sessions with English language learners, they often recognize that the collaboration is somehow out of sync, but they don't have the necessary techniques to get back on track. S. North (1984) asserts that while writing center assistance is collaborative, it is also student-centered, and consultants must "begin from where the student is, and move where the student moves" (p. 439).

Students who comprise the average writing center clientele bring varied majors and academic backgrounds to each tutoring session, and research

indicates that ELL writers bring many challenges to the writing process and composition instruction because of past writing experiences, academic expectations, and differences in schemata for topics (Leki, 1992; Bell & Youmans, 2006; Thonus, 2004; Williams, 2004). So, in addition to the usual responsibilities writing center tutors encounter when working with native speaking students struggling to write, they must also attempt to meet the more complex needs of ELL student writers, and they must delicately balance their role as expert tutors with their authority as representatives of the university (Bell & Youmans, 2006). Jane Cogie (2001) finds that tutors must continue to draw on their training as peer facilitators to act as an equal during consultations, even when confronted by students, like English language learners, who expect more professional help and authoritative opinions. Cogie's article "Peer Tutoring: Keeping the Contradiction Productive" defines the conflicting roles that must be enacted by the tutor; these conflicting roles complicate the assistance these tutors provide to students. She explains that "peer verses tutor, supporter of the student versus representative of the university, advocate of the writing process verses expert on the written product" are all dichotomous roles that tutors must find a way to integrate to be effective (p. 37).

In order to better understand the dynamic that can occur during sessions that present clashes in cultural expectations of the learning environment, this study explores peer tutoring sessions between native English speaking (L1) tutors and ELL students. This work investigates those issues by looking at linguistic dominance, which is a way to exert power by controlling the language through which communication occurs. Tutors trained in inquirybased pedagogy facilitate rather than control the language of the session, following the lead and authority of the student. However, tutors often experience dissonance when working with ELL students because they feel tension between what the student wants out of the session, which is often help with surface features and grammar, and what the tutors have been trained to address, which is process orientation and global issues. although writing tutors are taught to defer to the student when determining the focus and topic of a session, cultural and linguistic differences create tensions between their session goals and English language learners' session Should tutors follow the inquiry-based principle that the student should determine the content of the writing center session? If so, then the content of student-dominated ELL sessions can easily become grammarbased. Or do they follow the tenet that they work on global issues first? If so, then the session becomes tutor-dominated since the tutor will be determining the focus of the session rather than the student. Either way, tutors are put in the difficult situation of favoring one set of best practices at the expense of others. Thonus (1999) explains that "dominant individuals possess functional access to power through control over properties of discourse such as turn-taking [and] topic selection (p. 228). Linell (1990) finds a direct correlation between dominance and time-at-talk. linguistic dominance through turn-taking, topic selection, and time-at-talk are important constructs in writing center peer tutoring sessions and provide a framework through which to investigate cross-cultural sessions. Studying the factors that influence dominance, such as those indicated in the Thonus and Linell studies, will help us better understand the ELL tutoring situation and train peer tutors to anticipate differences between their L1 and ELL clients.

Specifically, this study investigates dominance in writing center interactions with ELL students through both quantitative and qualitative Quantitative evidence includes traditional linguistic measures of time-at-talk and turn-taking. Additionally, content and agenda-setting analysis of session dialogue sheds light on other factors that influence Finally, qualitative evidence, taken from post-consultation dominance. interviews, provides insight into the sometimes conflicting expectations of the consultation by both the tutor and the ELL student. Each data point provides a means through which to gauge, evaluate, and analyze the linguistic dominance established during the consultation, key components in determining the perceived effectiveness of peer tutoring sessions. Clear indication of dominance throughout the session by one participant or the other creates an imbalance that can compromise the overall effectiveness of the session because the session becomes less egalitarian and inquiry-based. However, when the power in a session is shared, which is the desirable environment for an inquiry-based writing center session, then those factors that point toward dominance will shift throughout the session, indicating that participants were able to establish an effective collaborative learning environment that values input by both peer tutor and student.

Methodology

The purpose of this project is to investigate how dominance in writing center sessions between L1 consultants and ELL students unfolds through examining tape recordings of 30 minute sessions. Using the categories established by linguists Thonus (1999) and Linell (1990) in their well regarded work on linguistic dominance, we focus on time-at-talk, turns in discourse, session content, and agenda setting. Post-session interviews were also recorded and analyzed. The purpose of this study is to analyze not only what took place in the recorded and transcribed sessions, but also to look at information gleaned from the post-session interviews in order to answer the following research questions:

- Who dominates the session based on time-at-talk?
- Who dominates the session based on turn-taking?
- Who sets the agenda?
- What constitutes and who determines session content?

These questions help identify the dominant party in the interaction that occurs between the tutor and the ELL student during a session. In order to fully answer these questions, it is important to examine the context in which the project took place, the participants chosen for the study, and the relevant terms and methods used for the analysis of data.

The Writing Center and Peer Tutors

All of the recorded and transcribed writing center consultations took place within a two-week span at a mid-size state funded southern university. The writing center operates under the supervision of a director, who is an associate professor of English, and two graduate students in the department of English. The center, open 50 hours a week, frequently assists students and faculty from all five colleges of the university, averaging about 2,000 individual sessions per year.

The center also includes 12 undergraduate peer tutors, who are hired based on teacher recommendation and academic performance. undergo intensive training to ensure that they approach every session with a substantial toolbox of methods and strategies. Through training, the tutors are taught that their sessions should focus on the writing process and the writer, not on the individual products the session might yield. Tutors achieve writing center goals by engaging in collaboration with the students, often through the inquiry method that utilizes open-ended questioning strategies that help students think critically about their work in an attempt to help develop the students' composing processes and approach to writing. Attention in any writing session must first be directed to global issues dealing with establishing focus, organizing ideas, and supporting evidence. Secondly, and only if time remains, the consultants address local issues such as paragraph structure, transitions, introductions, and conclusions. final concern is with editing and proofreading issues that address grammar, typographical errors, and citations. This hierarchy follows common writing center practice and theories of writing pedagogy.

Student Participants

The four writing center clients who participated in this study are all non-native speakers of English enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) composition courses at the time of the recordings. chosen due to their various linguistic backgrounds, areas of study, and university enrollment status. Their ESL instructors required visits to the writing center, and the students volunteered to have a regular writing center session recorded. Additionally, the students submitted copies of the written rough drafts used during the consultation and later sent final drafts of the same assignment via email for the study. They all agreed to participate in a brief post-consultation interview and signed informed consent forms acknowledging their willingness to participate in the research. For all but one of the four students, their first visit to the writing center was recorded so as not to complicate analysis of the interactions with previously established dialogue patterns. The two engineering graduate students were paired with writing center graduate teaching assistants who are familiar with graduate level writing expectations.

The students will be identified throughout the study by (S) for student and A,B,C, or D to distinguish their different backgrounds. The following table indicates the students' backgrounds and status.

Table 1
Student Identification

Student Identification	Gender	Level of Study/Area or College	Linguistic Background
Student A (SA)	Male	Graduate/Engineering	Mandarin Chinese
Student B (SB)	Male	Undergraduate/ Freshman Business	Russian
Student C (SC)	Male	Graduate/Engineering	Hindi and Indian English
Student D (SD)	Female	Undergraduate/ Sophomore German	Japanese

Student topics ranged from proposals for lab experiments to arguments about military base realignment (BRAC). SA came to the writing center with a draft of a paper for a graduate class in which he proposed lab experiments on an engineering issue he called "phase lock." The session focused on four main issues: IEEE formatting, summary, genre issues (proposal), and grammar/word choice. SB worked on a draft of a paper for a 100 level class in which he argued that U.S. outsourcing and job mobilization is positive for the economy. This session focused on thesis, evidence, quotations and MLA formatting, and grammar/word choice. Student C brought in a draft of a paper for a 100 level ESL class in which he argued that a local military base should not be closed as part of the military's base realignment program. In this session, the focus was on voice/credibility, and grammar/word choice. Finally, SD brought in a draft of a paper in which she compared Meji philosophy to moral education in the U.S. During this session, the tutor and student worked on genre, organization, documentation, and grammar/word choice.

Terms of Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative

Our first measure for analysis is **time-at-talk**. The study "Dominance in Academic Writing Tutorials: Gender, Language Proficiency, and the Offering of Suggestions" by Terese Thonus (1999) suggests that previous discourse studies make "direct correlations between dominance and measures such as time at talk [sic]" (p. 228). Robert Bales (1970) explains that "to take up time speaking in a small group is to exercise power over the other members of the group for at least the duration of the time taken" (p. 76). Thus, in this study, we calculated time-at-talk in order to examine whether or not one party, either the tutor or the student, dominated the conversation through talk-time and, even more importantly, whether or not this talk-time seemed to "exercise power" or dominance over the other participant. In order to determine time-at-talk, we listened to the entire recorded session and timed each speaker's utterance with a stopwatch. The sum of total seconds at talk excludes pauses and breaks while the consultant or student reads or searches resources for information.

The second area of analysis, **discourse turn-taking**, is harder to define because of the many ways it can be analyzed. For this study, we counted a turn in the conversation as when a speaker had the floor, and we marked it with an arrow in the left margin of the transcript. We did not count any utterances that "did not interrupt the current speaker's discourse or cause

the speaking turn to shift" (Moder & Halleck, 1998, p. 122).

For example:

Consultant: Does she think that you're using too much other people's words to support your own where it seems like you're, what you're saying is drowned out too much, maybe, by what the experts are saying? So, it kind of seems like what you're saying isn't as important?

Student: What I'm saying doesn't seem like it's mine.

Consultant: Okay.

Student: I didn't know how to fix that.

The utterance "okay," in this example, does not cause a shift in discourse, so it is not considered to be a turn since the flow of speech would not change if the "okay" were not in the discourse. We marked assertive turnstaken, interruption, with the notation "*taken" on the transcript because these changes of the floor happened mid-sentence for the previous turn. According to linguistic researchers Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), "transitions from one turn to the next" take place "with no gap and no overlap," but when the overlap occurs, it does not adhere as much to the rules of turn-taking (p. 708). Instead, these interruptions indicate a more forceful taking control of the flow of conversation, and this could indicate possible dominance on the part of the speaker.

The third level of linguistic analysis, the category of session content, indicates the type of commentary given to ELL students during the session. In this analysis, tutor suggestions fall into the separate categories of a) Global, b) Local, or c) Proofreading. According to Ryan (2002), a global suggestion concerns big picture issues of "content, focus, organization, point of view, and tone" (p. 9). Local suggestions address clarification within paragraphs, sentence organization, transitions between ideas, introductions, and conclusions. Proofreading suggestions target grammar, word choice, typographical errors, and citation. We divided tutors' suggestions into these categories based on how they impact the paper ideas and organization. Remember, writing center pedagogy stresses that tutor training should follow the hierarchy of global first, local second, and proofreading last. The tutors in this study were trained according to these standards. Thus, this level of analysis is especially interesting because it demonstrates the degree to which the tutors adhere to standard writing center pedagogy and practice in ELL sessions despite the ELL students' wish to focus on proofreading, particularly grammar.

The final level of analysis for dominance is the qualitative evidence from post-session interviews. Participants responded to questions about their expectations of writing center sessions and the perceived effectiveness of those sessions. The findings from this qualitative data help determine which party sets the agenda for the session and thereby establishes session content and tutor response; this evidence is essential in determining whether one participant dominates the overall session.

Study Findings and Data Analysis

Our findings conclude that, in keeping with theory and practice of tutor training, ELL students and peer tutors both demonstrate dominance at different times and in different areas in their writing consultations despite the fact that tutors often feel as though they dominate sessions with these international students. Quantitative evidence indicates mostly parity in factors that determine dominance between peer tutor and ELL student, with a slight preference toward linguistic dominance by the tutor. However, the qualitative evidence clearly shows that tutor dominance over agenda setting and feedback is negligible. Despite linguistic and cultural differences, ELL students and their peer tutors share session dominance when it comes to the overall structure and session content.

Time-at-Talk

The following table indicates the time-at-talk for each participant as well as total time-at-talk for the session. Consultants are shown as C1, C2, and C3. Only three consultants participated in the recordings; C1 worked with two student participants. Times are in seconds and minutes, and the talk-times do not include significant pauses, reading, or searching in style guides for documentation information. The final two columns indicate percentages of time-at-talk for the entire consultation by the L1 tutor and ELL student.

Table2 Time-at-talk

Consultant/ Student	Consultant Time	Student Time	Total Time	Percentage Tutor	Percentage Student
C1/SA	418sec. 7 min.	200 sec. 3.3 min.	618 sec. 10.3 min.	67.6%	32.3%
C2/SB	1093 sec. 18.2 min.	678 sec. 11.3 min.	1771 sec. 29.5 min.	61.7%	38.2%
C1/SC	608 sec. 10.1 min.	498 sec. 8.3 min.	1106 sec. 18.4 min.	54.9%	45%
C3/SD	887 sec. 14.8 min.	504 sec. 8.4 min.	1391 sec. 23.2 min.	63.7%	36.2%
TOTAL	3006 sec. 50.1 min.	1,880 sec. 31.3 min.	4886 sec. 81.43 min.	61.5%	38.4%

This data shows that tutors average 61.5% of the time-at-talk compared with the students, who accumulated approximately 38.4% of the talk time. Tutors often have to speak more as they explain their responses and suggestions, so a slight preference toward the tutor for time-at-talk is expected. However, these numbers do show a preference for the tutor in the time-at-talk category, which points to the fact that tutors have an advantage and, therefore, show dominance in this category. It is interesting to note that even though the session topics differ in task and the drafts differ in genre, and despite the fact that some sessions have over twice the amount of total time-at-talk in comparison to other sessions, the percentages

of talk-time for the tutor and student stay within close range for all four consultations, revealing a recurring pattern and demonstrating reliability in data collection.

Turn-taking

The next dimension in our study looks at turn-taking to help determine dominance during writing center sessions with English language learners. As described before, turns in discourse occur any time the floor changes, when the flow of conversation shifts to another participant. The number of turns taken indicates linguistic dominance in conversation and turns taken assertively, where the one speaker interrupts the other, indicate power and dominance. Based on the turns labeled and counted on the transcripts for this study, the following, Table 3, summarizes the results. Note the turns taken assertively (*taken) indicate an interruption of speech. Total turns include the turns by the tutor and the student. In this calculation, the turns with (*) do not count more than the original turn count for each party.

Table 3 Turn-takina

Consultant Student	Turns by Consultant	Turns by Student	Turns Taken (*) by C	Turns Taken (*) by S	Total Turns
C1-SA	32	30	1	1	62
C2-SB	66	64	6	3	130
C1-SC	37	38	1	3	75
C3-SD	48	47	3	0	95
TOTALS	183	179	11	7	362

The data in the table above shows a quite different picture of dominance than in the time-at-talk category. When viewing the data on turns by student and turns by tutor, it is significant to note the parity of turns-taken by both parties. Although the tutors take more turns than the students, the difference in the amount of turns is negligible. Out of total turns-taken, tutors take only a total of four more turns than ELL students, and if we look at each session individually, tutors take either one or two more turns than the students in three of the case studies, and in the third, the student takes more turns than the tutor. The second consultation, C2-SB, which focused on outsourcing and dealt with the writing issues of thesis, evidence, transitions, and quotations/MLA formatting, far outnumbered other consultations in turns-taken because it was significantly longer than the other sessions.

These numbers show a very different picture of dominance emerging. If we look specifically at turn-taking, we see more of an egalitarian, collaborative session in which both parties contribute equally to the conversation. In fact, the third consultation, C1-SC, is worth noting. During this session, the ELL student showed dominance by taking more turns than the L1 tutor and, even more interesting to note, the student also took more assertive turns, at a significant rate of three to one.

It is worthwhile to discuss the findings from time-at-talk and turn-taking in conjunction because the meaning of this data is opaque when viewed in isolation. The slight time-at-talk dominance on the part of the tutors suggests that their turns were longer in the overall view of the session. However, the parity in the turn-taking better illustrates the movement of the session. Turns were almost even in number for all four sessions. Similar results emerge when comparing the turns taken aggressively (*) because in one session, the student took more aggressive turns; in another, aggressive turn-taking was even; and then two sessions demonstrate aggressive turn-taking by the tutors. These results indicate that tutors show slight dominance over ELL students through time-at-talk; however, they show equality in turn-taking. If we look at these categories together, the numbers are not significant enough to claim that these examples prove that tutors dominate sessions with English language learners.

The final quantitative analysis of this study emphasizes language and provides insight into the content of the writing sessions. It can be assumed that the participant who sets the agenda for the session is more dominant. Just as in the previous two quantitative samples, the content analysis was tallied from a review of the transcripts of the four sessions. This analysis identifies whether the content of the session contains suggestions for revision that focus more at the global or local level, which mirrors tutor training, or whether the agenda moves more toward editing and proofreading, which would indicate that English language learners, who understandably have more concerns than L1 students for surface comments, dominate the content of the session. Our methodology was to underline all suggestions made by tutors during a writing center session and then classify them according to our established categories. Table 4 summarizes the findings:

Table 4
Session Content

Consultant/ Student	Global Comments	Local Comments	Proofreading Comments	Percentage Global	Percentage Local	Percentage Proofreading
C1-SA	1	2	7	10%	20%	70%
C2-SB	1	3	10	7%	21.4%	71.4%
C1-SC	0	3	6	0	33%	66%
C3-SD	1	3	7	9%	27%	64%
Total	3	11	30	6.8%	25%	68%

Significantly, this data shows that, despite intensive training that teaches tutors to focus first on global and local comments, these ELL sessions overwhelmingly favored proofreading suggestions. In fact, tutor comments focusing on proofreading issues outnumbered local and global suggestions combined by approximately 50%. Global comments accounted for merely three of 44 total suggestions, and local comments accounted for only 11 of the 44 total suggestions. These quantitative findings clearly show a trend toward suggestions on surface level issues, which research has shown (Leki, 1992; Cogie, 2001) to be a distinct preference for English language learners working in writing center settings.

Our transcripts bear out this preference and demonstrate that ELL students showed dominance in setting the agenda and determining the content of the sessions. As the transcripts demonstrate, ELL students often insisted that tutors change their session strategies to focus on diction and other surface features. The following is a typical example of a session transcript in which it becomes clear that the ELL student dominated content of the session by pressing for answers to issues of grammar and diction even though the consultant tried to guide him to think more carefully about voice and evidence, both global issues. This example indicates the student showed dominance when looking at session content, even though the tutor dominated in time-at-talk.

> SC: This one. I want to transition from here to say that I concluded here by saying that there are benefits but there are some concerns. . . I want to say what is going on right now. In outsourcing, right?

> C1: Are you mainly worried about your transition from this topic to that?

> **SC:** Does this [pointing to sentence] give you the idea of what I just described?

> C1: Ah, I think you probably do need a little more detail, maybe another sentence that transitions and makes it more explicit. Maybe having discussed the benefits (*transition)

> SC: Having discussed the benefits—does that sound alright?

> C1: Yeah, because what I hear you saying is that you've looked at the benefits, but now you want to get a fuller picture of benefits plus anything else that's a part of what's happening, so maybe just have something at the beginning of the sentence that acknowledges that's what you've looked at and you're going to turn and look at something else. Then the transitions there as well— it's clear where you are going.

> **SC:** Exactly. I wasn't sure about this is really coming the meaning that I wanted. Also, I'm not sure I transitioned. (Reading his paper out loud) How does this sentence look? Does it look alright?

> C1: uh huh. Yeah, I mean, it's straight forward and it flows into the next. Yeah, Fine.

SC: It's fine?

C1: What were you worried about with it?

SC: Just the sentence construction.

In the above example, it is evident that SC pushes the graduate level tutor to evaluate his sentence construction and diction in detail. And even though the tutor tries to explain that the student may need more content and evidence concerning the benefits of outsourcing, the ELL student can't seem to move past individual words and their placement in the sentence. His tactic is to pose specific questions repeatedly until the tutor capitulates and provides him with the diction advice he seeks. This type of exchange is typical of the other transcriptions in this study and provides evidence that ELL students often determine the content of the dialogue and, therefore, demonstrate dominance in agenda-setting.

In the post-session interview, C1 underscores this finding when he states that, although he knew that there were global issues that should have been addressed, in the end he allows the student to determine the content for the session: "I asked him what his concerns were and I structured the rest of the consultation based on what he told me, or at least I tried to." Since the ELL student set the agenda for the session, sentence level issues took precedence over global issues at a rate of 66% for this particular session. The tutor explains, "He came with the questions, so, I mean, . . . he pretty much directed it." This transcript and the follow-up interview clearly indicate that, although the quantifiable data of talk time (55% for C1 and 45% for SC) shows the tutor to be dominant, and turn-taking (37 for C1 and 38 for SC) shows neither party to be dominant, content analysis and qualitative interviews situate SC as the dominate interlocutor in terms of content in this session. Of course, this finding does not negate the importance of time-attalk and turn-taking, which are more traditional evidence for dominance; it does mean that session content is another important dimension when considering session dominance. Other transcripts bear out this same finding.

The result of these findings is that, although the tutor dominates time-attalk at a rate of 61.5% to 38.4% and the turn-taking shows parity with tutors taking only four more total turns than students, content analysis shows an overwhelming preference for surface-level comments, evidence that ELL students more commonly set the agenda and determine the content of the sessions. Overall, allowing students to set the agenda is keeping with tutor training. However, because ELL students tend to focus on surface features such as grammar and diction, dissonance occurs for tutors because they are trained to focus first on global and local issues before attending to grammar and diction. This dissonance might account for much of the anxiety and discomfort expressed by L1 peer tutors when they describe sessions with ELL students. Despite their knowledge and training in working with English language learners, tutors still experience tension when they feel as though they are being guided to focus on product rather than process.

Implications

Understanding the complicated issues of dominance that often arise in peer education between L1 tutors and English language learners can help those of us in learning assistance better prepare our peer educators to work effectively with students of various cultural backgrounds. Session strategies that promote an egalitarian relationship that includes both participants equally participating in talk-time, smoothly taking appropriate and non-

aggressive turns, and alternately guiding session content remains the ideal. However, practice is often messier. Helping tutors work with English language learners can include offering acknowledgement of the dissonance that can occur when tutors encourage students to set the agenda only to realize that the content of the session runs counter to their training. Providing ongoing training on ELL issues that includes mock sessions, sample papers, and presentations by ESL faculty can help tutors prepare themselves for the tensions they will experience. The goal of training, however, shouldn't be to placate that tension, but instead the dissonance should serve as a sounding board, as a moment in which to reflect on the practice of writing center work. Balancing what the field knows about responding to student writing with the needs of the individual student can be tricky. Helping tutors negotiate these competing needs remains worthwhile in their development as peer educators.

Future research in this area might include case study analyses of the ways that dominance is negotiated in ongoing tutorial relationships, both with English language learners and with L1 students. Does the negotiation of time-at-talk and agenda-setting change over time as both parties become more familiar with each other and their expectations of the writing center session? In what ways does that negotiation occur? Does tutor dissonance decrease or shift with additional training in cross-cultural understandings of the tutorial setting? And most importantly, in what ways might we close the gap between these often disparate expectations in order for both participants to feel confident that the needs of the students have been met?

These questions help us reflect on the complexities in the burgeoning field of peer education. In this study, discourse analysis along with followup interviews help illuminate the ways in which English language learners and peer educators negotiate power and dominance in face-to-face writing However, it is important to understand that the act of center sessions. negotiation is not the means to an end, but instead creates an important space within which to learn. The negotiation of power is, in itself, a teachable moment.

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