

Teaching for Transfer in the Writing Center

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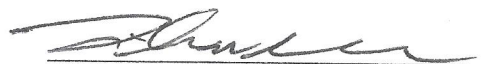
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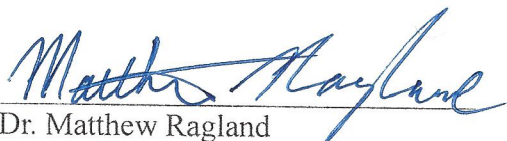
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To my husband, Danny: Thank you for listening to my ideas, encouraging me to be tough, and teaching me how to laugh at myself when I'm struggling. Your love and support have been my constant through this entire process.

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Chapter 1: Taking Transfer Beyond the Classroom

Teaching for transfer is the act of providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to transfer their learning between classes and into real-world situations. Similarly, tutoring for transfer is the act of providing students with the tools they need to carry knowledge and skills from tutoring sessions into real-world applications. In this research project, my goal is to study tutoring for transfer in college writing and the potential for further tutor training. At the beginning of the spring semester, I provided writing center tutors with a thirty-minute training session on facilitating transfer during tutoring sessions. By providing tutors with a general training in transfer, I prepared them for a more successful semester of facilitating transfer of skills from composition courses into content-based courses in the university. Then, I observed tutors working with composition students during multiple stages of the writing process. After my observations, I was able to develop a set of recommendations for robust training in tutoring for transfer. By providing tutors with the background knowledge about teaching for transfer, the writing tutors in the university writing center will understand the value of composition courses as more than stand-alone first-year courses. Furthermore, the new robust training recommendations will help tutors to develop a deeper understanding of the major TtT components—key terms and reflective writing. This deep understanding will then help them to apply the concepts of key terms and reflective writing during their tutoring sessions.

The pages of this project first include background information about teaching for transfer in the university and in composition. I then explain how teaching for transfer has a unique and special role in university writing centers. Next, I provide background of the tutors who participated in my study and an explanation of the pre-semester training I provided for the university writing tutors. Then, I describe the observation sessions I recorded throughout the

semester, as well as the strengths and weaknesses during those sessions. Finally, I provide the recommendations for further training—a set of training modules that are far more extensive than the initial module. After the completion of my project, tutors will be able to identify similarities and differences between writing assignments as well as the knowledge used for varying assignments. In turn, they will be able to guide students from one assignment to the next and from one course to the next so students may utilize skills learned in composition more efficiently.

Teaching for Transfer in the University and in Composition

Since the early 20th century, the concept of teaching for transfer has had a well-earned place in educational studies, starting with the work of American psychologists Edward Thorndike and Robert S. Woodworth (Devet 120). Composition instructor and writing lab director Bonnie Devet has had a long-term focus on research in the writing center, and she has written numerous articles on the topic, some which discuss creativity, tutor training, genre, and transfer. According to Devet, Thorndike and Woodworth's introduction of teaching for transfer in educational psychology studies was a pivotal point for understanding how students learn and draw connections between ideas. In her article "The Writing Center and Transfer of Learning," Bonnie Devet provides a primer for writing center directors, who she believes can find great value in training tutors in the concepts of transfer.

According to Devet, educational psychology says that "the mind engages in the process of transfer whenever it identifies similarities" (122). Two types of transfer which occur frequently in the university are "content to content and procedure to procedure" (123). In content to content transfer, students relate previously existing knowledge to new knowledge to find deeper understanding of unfamiliar concepts. In procedure to procedure transfer, students

duplicate steps for completing one assignment to create a new or different assignment. (Devet 123). Both types of transfer require students to identify similarities and differences between learning situations. For college students everywhere, having this ability can provide opportunities to practice critical thinking and meaning-making.

In composition studies, some writing teachers are increasingly placing emphasis on transfer in the writing curriculum. Some composition programs across the country are beginning to experiment with transfer-based curriculum, but teaching for transfer in composition is not an entirely new approach. One of the early researchers to focus on transfer in writing was Lucille McCarthy. In her 1987 study, McCarthy described a student, Dave, who struggled to make connections between his composition class and his other writing assignments during his freshman and sophomore years. Through observation, interviews, composing-aloud protocol, and text analysis, McCarthy aimed to answer questions about what writing tasks college students face, how students interpret these tasks, and what social factors influence student behavior and achievement (236). Through these processes, McCarthy was able to identify what she called the *writer's conscious concerns* (241). Tracking Dave's conscious concerns would allow McCarthy to identify writing issues which were commonly emphasized in his classes. Furthermore, this tracking process would allow McCarthy to determine where Dave could make connections between writing tasks in each of his classes.

Among the multiple important observations McCarthy made was that “although the writing tasks in the three classes were in many ways similar, Dave interpreted them as being totally different from each other and totally different from anything he had ever done before” (243). All of the papers in Dave's classes were either summary or analysis, and the audience was similar in every case—the instructors of the courses. The instructors intended for students to

learn about discourse conventions, and his composition instructor explicitly focused on lessons that would teach students techniques usable in many different types of classes—writing practices like creating “unified paragraphs” and “explicitly connected sentences” (244). Still, when Dave moved from writing in composition courses to writing in poetry or biology courses, his concern for issues like cohesive sentences, cohesive paragraph structure, and editing for correctness greatly diminished. His concern for the *content* of the courses took greater emphasis than his concern for high-quality writing.

When we look at Dave, we see a clear example of a major concern for writing teachers everywhere—that students will only make use of their new writing knowledge in the writing classroom. Writing teachers hope to provide knowledge that their students can use in courses outside of the writing classroom, but without explicit instruction in transfer, students may not easily identify those connections. Thankfully, in many universities, college students have multiple venues through which they may receive lessons in transfer and finding connections, and the writing center is one of those venues. Since many university writing center tutors are students, they too need the learning opportunities to develop an understanding of transfer.

One researcher who has studied transfer specifically in the writing center is Heather N. Hill, who works as assistant professor in the English department at Cedarville University. In her article on tutoring for transfer, Heather N. Hill describes an hour-long training session with university writing center tutors and what she learned from 30 hours of observation afterward. While Hill acknowledges the complexities of transfer as a process, she also makes note of some “pedagogical techniques” that are particularly useful in facilitating transfer:

having a high level of initial learning; being able to see the similarities and differences between learning situations; understanding key concepts about writing—abstract

principles that transcend individual writing situations; being able to use metacognitive reflection; and promoting certain dispositions towards learning, such as active learning and motivation (78-79).

In the one-hour training session with the tutors, Hill focused on each of the five techniques above. Through lecture and discussions, the tutors discovered and discussed ways to help students in each of these areas.

Two concepts most relevant to my study in Hill's discussion were the ideas of teaching key concepts about writing and the metacognitive process of reflection after and before individual writing assignments. Regarding key concepts, Hill argues that "if tutors can help students understand these broader concepts about writing, students might be able to take that abstract knowledge with them into other writing situations" (81). Following the ground-breaking work of Kathleen Yancey, Leann Robertson, and Kara Taczak, Hill urges tutors to teach concepts like genre, discourse communities, and rhetorical situation. Hill also emphasizes the importance of metacognition through reflection, arguing that an important part of initial learning is understanding how new concepts can be applied in the future. She also notes the importance of looking to past experiences once reaching a future situation (82). According to Hill, "tutors can help students reflect by engaging them in discussions of their mental processes" (82). Her study concluded that tutors trained in transfer were over twice more likely to explicitly ask students to discuss their knowledge and transfer of skills. From the results, we learn that one obstacle students face with the transfer of knowledge is the unlikelihood of consciously considering how they mentally process old and new information. They may also fail to consider how they use past and future knowledge, especially without prompting from a teacher or tutor.

In many situations, writing teachers and tutors place deepest emphasis on providing

writers with the tools for the outer writing process. Writing practices like outlining, drafting, and revising are all presentable pieces of evidence for student progress, and they are important concepts that college students should be familiar with as they move from composition into content-based courses, like biology or psychology. It is important for us, however, to look much deeper—beyond these outward evidences of student progress. To promote metacognition that Heather N. Hill emphasizes, writing tutors must develop an awareness of the inner thinking processes of their students. They must learn to observe the ways students make connections, develop ideas, and communicate those connections and developments on paper. Promoting tutoring for transfer is not just about teaching terminology or key terms so students can communicate about their writing. Facilitating transfer is also about providing students with a deeper awareness of how they think about writing, a concept that cognitive process theorists like Linda Flower and John Hayes studied in depth.

The concept of stages in the writing process is an important one as it teaches students that their work cannot be written in a single draft. In their 1981 article about cognitive process theory, Linda Flower and John R. Hayes note that “there is a venerable tradition in rhetoric and composition which sees the composing process as a series of decisions and choices” (365). Flower and Hayes acknowledge that prewriting, drafting, and revising have a place in composition, but they want to dig deeper and ask how these choices happen. Do all of the factors of “purposes,” “relationships,” “exigencies,” and “language” work together to create a clean thinking process, or do they create conflict in the writer’s mind? (366). In relation to my project, I must also ask if college composition writers consciously consider their thought processes and the choices they are making as they work. With this level of metacognition, students can consciously carry their learning into multiple areas of their education and their lives.

One primary point Flower and Hayes make is that “writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing” (366). In other words, the acts of prewriting, drafting, and revision do not occur as a strict linear set of actions. To be clear, the stage process model has contributed to the improvement of teaching composition. The stage process model is also vital to the success of writing centers as tutors teach their students that good writing doesn’t happen in one draft. However, the linear stage process model is incomplete because it fails to consider the thinking process which constantly transforms and changes as the written work develops. The writer’s ideas and beliefs change as the writer learns about her message and her conversation with her audience.

If transformations and changes in student thought are naturally occurring processes in the mind of most, if not all, writers, then equipping students with transfer-related knowledge may allow them to think more clearly in terms of how these processes work for them individually. Engaging in metacognitive reflection requires thinking about thinking and writing about writing—two skills which are strengthened when students develop self-awareness in the composition classroom. Writing tutors can use the concepts in transfer theory to give students the language they need to express the changes that occur as they move through the key processes described by Flowers and Hayes. Writing composition curriculum that includes transfer is ideal, and having writing tutors who are prepared to facilitate transfer during complex cognition processes will benefit students immeasurably.

In the writing center, writing tutors receive an initial training that brushes by the concepts described by Heather N. Hill and Flower and Hayes. The tutors are trained to provide non-directive tutoring. They provide additional instruction in the linear writing process, but they also do much more. Writing tutors ask questions that guide the students to deeper thinking about the

content and organization of their papers. Writing tutors give students opportunities to explain their ideas verbally, linking thought to spoken ideas and then to the written word. This type of communication helps the student to participate in thinking-aloud processes, causing them to consider why they are choosing specific content for their papers and how those ideas relate to one another.

Writing teachers can present a multitude of skills, tools, and techniques to students throughout a semester, and instructors may see students successfully applying these tools and techniques to their work. When students move to content-based courses, as we saw with McCarthy's study with Dave, the importance of understanding content often takes precedence over components like cohesiveness and productive revisions and proofreading. At Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM), writing teachers work to teach students about pre-writing, drafting, revision, and proofreading. Students learn about clarity and organization. But they also learn much more.

Since fall 2018 and spring 2019, the AUM composition program has begun to implement sweeping changes to the curriculum. The changes are modeled after the work of Kathleen Blake Yancey, Lianne Robertson, and Kara Taczek, which is described in their book: *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*. According to Yancey, Robertson, and Taczek, a transfer-based composition curriculum is made of three main components. The first component is the requirement of key terms, which help "students describe and theorize writing" and represent "the core concepts about writing that students learn and practice in the course" (57). For English 1010 at AUM, the required key terms include reflection, genre, rhetorical situation, audience, and purpose. Each of the four units has designated key terms. During that unit, the instructor is expected to discuss the meanings of the key terms in relation to the course

readings, the present writing assignment, and potential future writing situations. After the unit, the student is expected to use the key terms effectively in their reflection papers. They may use this specific language to describe their learning and future applications for this learning.

This second component to the transfer-based curriculum is a reflective writing after each unit. Students write about what they knew before the writing assignment, what they learned during the assignment, and how they will apply their new knowledge in future writing situations. Students are also encouraged to relate the classroom lessons, readings, and key terms to their past, present, and future as writers. At the end of the semester, students in the composition program create a portfolio of all their drafts, teacher and student comments, and final drafts. The portfolios also include the reflective writings from the semester. Students are also expected to include some short writing assignments such as discussion or blog posts in order to give a full picture of their development and learning in the class.

Finally, the portfolios include a cover letter, which serves as the final reflection before moving to the next English class or content-based course. In English 1020, students must also identify multiple areas where they will use their new skills and include a paper from another course from the semester in their portfolio. The reflective writings and the portfolios help students to develop self-awareness of their developments and identities as writers inside and outside the academic community. Providing self-awareness for composition students allows them to develop their own personal theories of writing—theories which they may use throughout their time at the university.

As college students progress through their years in higher education, there is one place they can continue to go each year: a place that can provide consistent support from start to finish. The writing center. The writing center at Auburn University at Montgomery, which is called the

Learning Center, provides students with assistance with writing tasks at any part of the process, from freshman year to graduate school. Students may work with the same tutor for multiple semesters, allowing the tutor to develop an understanding of different writers' strengths and weaknesses. This unique relationship is naturally conducive to transfer because the tutor can recognize what a student has learned and how those lessons can be applied to future assignments. They also have a bigger picture of the courses students are taking outside of composition—something that writing instructors do not have such easy access to.

In short thirty-minute sessions, tutors have the opportunity to assess whether students are recognizing the potential for transfer between courses and writing tasks—something that is much easier to recognize at a one-on-one level. If the tutor notices a disconnect, they may briefly redirect the student to reflections of the bigger picture for their learning. Since tutors often close their tutoring sessions with to-do lists for the students to complete independently, students may leave sessions with a deeper awareness of how their courses are connected to one another. Then, independently, these students can practice connecting their writing knowledge more effectively to various assignments across the curriculum. These tutoring practices show a potential for modeling transfer for students who are struggling with metacognitive processes independently. To help tutors use their unique roles, they should be given high-quality training to prepare for tutoring sessions.

Filling in the Blanks: Training, Observations, Interviews, and Recommendations

In my study, I began by providing tutors with a 30-minute training session on the AUM Composition Curriculum and the ideas expressed by researchers like Hill, Flower, and Hayes. In the previous semester, tutors received training on broad concepts related to transfer. The director of composition at AUM presented information about the readings, key terms, and reflective

writings. This previous training session was short, so my aim in training was to provide tutors with a stronger grasp on the importance of transfer and the techniques teachers and tutors can use to promote transfer. In my pre-semester training session, I provided a review of the key terms and reflective writings. I developed a chart that showed the general timing of these assignments in a semester. Then, I taught tutors about Hill's five basic skills for promoting transfer:

having a high level of initial learning; being able to see the similarities and differences between learning situations; understanding key concepts about writing—abstract principles that transcend individual writing situations; being able to use metacognitive reflection; and promoting certain dispositions towards learning, such as active learning and motivation (78-79).

Finally, I provided tutors with examples of questions they may ask to facilitate transfer as well as examples of the best timing to ask transfer-related questions. My aim in providing example questions and timing was to give the tutors a jumping point as they began to learn about transfer. We discussed example situations when the tutor could ask questions to drive the conversation toward a broad discussion of learned skills and specific ways to use those learned skills outside of the composition classroom. Tutoring practices largely focus on spoken conversation to promote thinking aloud opportunities for students. By providing the tutors with sample questions, they would have more ideas for ways to steer conversations toward practices in metacognition.

After the training session, I explained my research project to the tutors and requested volunteers. I received interest from five tutors, and three of the interested tutors had schedules that aligned with mine. The three tutors were experienced in the writing center and, by coincidence, two were homeschooled for most of their grade-school years.

Lena

Lena graduated with an undergraduate degree in history in 2018. She first began tutoring for a family with five children from her homeschooling co-op when she was high school aged. She first tutored the students in Latin and later began tutoring them in reading and essay writing. It was during her last years before college that Lena discovered her love for tutoring, reading, history, and writing. When she began college, she quickly declared as a history major and dove into her classes. She was then nominated to become a tutor in AUM's Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. Her job was to become the tutor for a specific set of classes, and she was responsible for helping students succeed in the technical parts of their papers. According to Lena, the students already had a strong grasp on the content of these courses, so tutoring during this time focused on things like organization, punctuation, and grammar. Her experiences in the WAC program helped her to develop as a writing tutor because it provided a shift from helping children with things like science papers to giving advice on longer length essays.

In the WAC program, Lena received her first set of training in writing tutoring skills. According to Lena, she was required to prepare for the training by reading sections of books like John Bean's *Engaging Ideas* and the *Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. The training lasted for a few days at the beginning of the semester, and new tutors spent time discussing the readings together. After a year with the WAC program, Lena was offered a tutoring job with the AUM Learning Center. There, she was trained more specifically in higher order concerns, lower order concerns, and non-directive tutoring. Lena said that the training she received through the Learning Center was a transformative experience because it taught her new theories and ideas about writing that she'd never used before.

Lark

Like Lena, Lark was homeschooled for most of her grade-school years. She has had a long-term love for reading, writing, and art. She is an undergraduate student with a double major in graphic design and English. Her experience with tutoring began when she started private tutoring in 2016. After five months of private tutoring, she was offered a tutoring position in the Learning Center. She received a similar type of training as Lena, and her long-term work there has provided her with multiple opportunities for further training at yearly and monthly sessions with the director. Since she began tutoring in the Learning Center, she has become confident in her tutoring abilities as well as her personal writing skills. She considers herself to be a critical thinker with strong skills in reviewing and editing written work. As an emerging professional in her field, she believes her critical thinking skills and her focus on detail allow her to consider students' personal writing issues metacognitively.

In addition to tutoring in the Learning Center, Lark has had experience in marketing, graphic design, and editing. Lark worked as the co-editor of AUM's student-run creative journal, the *Filibuster*. She later served as the graphic designer for the *Filibuster* as well. Lark's experience in these various fields gives her a unique perspective on writing genres and audience. She has personally worked in multiple genres and has written for multiple audiences, so she has a unique opportunity to explain these concepts to English 1010 students with real-world examples.

Megan

The third tutor to participate in my project, Megan, has a very much different background from her peers in the writing center. Unlike Lena and Lark, Megan did not have previous tutoring experience before she began tutoring in the Learning Center. Instead, she was recommended by a graduating psychology major to replace him as the center's psychology tutor.

Without a background in English, Megan expressed that being a writing tutor at first felt very unusual. She explained that before college, she struggled with undiagnosed dyslexia, which was a hinderance to her confidence. After receiving extensive training from the Learning Center staff, however, Megan collected a variety of tools to help her move through her first few weeks of tutoring for writing.

Prior to my observations with Megan, she had worked for almost two years in the Learning Center and had graduated with her undergraduate degree in psychology. During her years in the Learning Center, Megan learned a lot not only about tutoring but also about herself as a writer. As she encouraged her students to work through the writing process in stages, she began to consider the stages she used for herself. She learned to use thinking aloud protocol during tutoring sessions and also for herself as she studied in college. Today, Megan considers herself a confident writing tutor. She has learned a lot in her time as a tutor and looks forward to continuing her development through further training going forward.

During my interviews with both tutors, I gathered information about their understanding of transfer and the AUM curriculum. Part of my purpose was to see which parts of the curriculum the tutors still needed practice in. I asked them to explain the purpose of the reflective writings, their experiences with the reflections, and their understanding of the key terms. Tutors expressed their areas of understanding as well as areas of concern when tutoring for transfer. I will discuss their concerns in relation to the tutoring sessions I observed.

Observation Techniques and Goals

In my study, I observed each writing tutor a total of seven tutoring sessions and I recorded the sessions on my voice recorder. After the sessions, I listened to the recordings and transcribed them. I used these recordings to look for moments when the tutor successfully

facilitated transfer for the writing student. I also looked for missed opportunities for facilitating transfer. Observing these missed opportunities has allowed me to understand where my pre-semester training was missing important information. Additionally, this has allowed me to develop further recommendations for tutor training in the future.

In the chapters to come, I will share the three most important issues I observed in tutoring for transfer, which relate to reflective writing, key terms, and metacognitive discussion. I will provide examples of moments when the tutors successfully helped their students move forward and moments when they appeared to struggle with the teaching for transfer curriculum. Then, I will analyze these issues, identifying possible causes and opportunities for change. Finally, I will present a series of training modules writing center directors can use to help their tutors become familiar with transfer from composition courses into content courses. It is my hope that these recommendations will serve as a jumping point for further tutoring for transfer research in the fields of writing center theory and composition theory.

Chapter 2: Observations and Interviews

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the history of teaching for transfer as well as its place in teaching composition. Teaching for transfer involves providing students with the skills and information they need to carry their learning from one class to another, or from one subject to another. In composition, transfer is of greater value because composition courses alone can often seem isolated and sometimes unnecessary to those looking in from the outside. Writing teachers strive to provide students with the writing knowledge they need to succeed beyond their classes; teaching for transfer is an explicit technique that transparently presents the needs for transfer to writing students. In the writing center, tutors must use different techniques to achieve similar goals.

After the training session, I observed three writing tutors during tutoring sessions throughout the semester. Each of the sessions was a one-on-one tutoring session between a volunteer tutor and an ENGL 1010 student. Each of the students agreed to be observed, and they were assured that their names and other personal information would not be collected in any way. The tutors each placed the recorder on their desk near the student, allowing the entire session to be recorded by voice. These recordings allowed me to identify specific opportunities for improvement in tutoring first year composition students.

Observations Introduction

After the Spring 2019 Learning Center training session, I explained my research study and requested that anyone interested fill out a consent form. Five writing tutors volunteered to be a part of my project, and I identified the three whose schedules fit mine the best: Lena, Lark, and Marie. I began observations as the first unit was wrapping up in most ENGL 1010 classes. Each of my observations took place during a one-on-one session with a writing tutor and an ENGL 1010 student. I observed during multiple times during the semester, giving me the opportunity to see how the tutors promoted transfer for various genres of writing. The varying observation times also allowed me to see how tutors varied their approach during different parts of the writing process.

In order to prevent discomfort for the tutor and student, I sat a considerable distance away from the desk where the session was taking place. My hope in my physical placement was that the sessions would remain natural and comfortable. During each session, I listened, took notes, and watched for visual cues that would help when analyzing my results. In all, I observed seven sessions, and each session provided me with a unique perspective on existing skills and gaps that can be filled in tutor trainings.

One positive thing I noted during my observation was that the tutors already exhibit a great deal of skill when working one-on-one with their students. Like the initial learning that Heather N. Hill discusses, sometimes the tutors must explain information or details that the students didn't understand completely after class. Of course, this lack of initial learning can be attributed to many issues, from a change in classroom environment to a language barrier or a learning disability. The specific issues with initial learning vary as well. Sometimes, the students haven't retained the knowledge from the classroom about the writing process. At other times, the students don't have a full grasp of the key terms or the reflection process. Writing tutors in the writing center are aware of the variety of issues they might encounter, and they are prepared to provide mini-lessons to help the student improve for the long-term. Furthermore, the writing tutors all showed strength in their ability to use conversation to help students develop ideas for their papers. This is important because the higher order concerns like content and clarity depend on confidence and idea development. Many of the students appeared more confident in their speaking abilities than their writing abilities, and the tutors were able to bring out the best in them during each session.

The Argumentative Essay

In one ENGL 1010 course section, students were asked to write an argumentative essay in which they select the two habits of mind that were most valuable for incoming college freshman. The students were allowed to choose from a list, which included openness, engagement, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, metacognition, liberty, and character. The genre of the paper was a formal argument, and their support for their argument was supposed to come from their descriptions of personal experiences as college freshman. I observed two sessions during which the students were developing their ideas for this paper. Because of varying

skill and confidence levels, the outcomes for the tutoring sessions were each very different. Still, there were a few moments that reflected a further need for training during both sessions. First, the tutors showed a clear understanding of the concepts behind the key terms, but most of the facilitation of transfer was implicit. If the tutors can focus their knowledge on explicit facilitation of transfer, the students will develop a stronger sense of the knowledge they need for metacognitive reflection. Second, it became apparent that neither of the tutors connected the requirements of the previous assignment—the analysis and evaluation—to the new, formal argumentative assignment.

The first observation was with Lark and a student who had already developed a great deal of her ideas. Lark helped her to continue brainstorming ideas through conversation, and she asked a lot of questions to continue building connections between her ideas and the examples. Lark's student had already selected the two habits of mind she wanted to write about—curiosity and creativity. Through their conversation, Lark was able to help her student express and develop complex ideas about her selected habits of mind. Lark took time to listen to her student's answers and write down answers as her student spoke. This technique allows the student to place original thoughts on paper without being slowed down by the physical process of writing or typing.

During the session, there were multiple instances when the tutor, Lark, implicitly promoted metacognition and a discussion of the key terms for ENGL 1010. First, at the beginning of the session, Lark asked the student how her previous paper went. The student said she didn't know because it hadn't been graded yet, but Lark continued to pursue the discussion, reminding her: "you approached it by using those key terms you had in your assignment and you were able to implement them, so I think you did very well." Lark then connected the use of the

two key terms, genre and audience, to the assignment description for the unit three paper.

Reading the assignment description, she notes, “it’s talking about writing in college and beyond the college context, so this focuses on writing ... so how do you think you’d do that with this argument? An argumentative paper?” While Lark does not explicitly mention the key terms audience and genre, she does point to the ideas those key terms promote—that each assignment in the university has an audience, and that writers vary their approach based on differences in genre, like the analysis and evaluation versus the argument paper. Lark does not give away the answers, but instead prompts the student to explain her approach in a general sense. The student was then required to consider the specific requirements for the type of paper she was writing. Further, she had to identify the unique ways to approach that type of paper. While this is usually a tough question for ENGL 1010 students, prompting students to consider their approach does help them to identify the gaps in their own knowledge, something Lark successfully did during this session.

The question of approach quickly led Lark and her student to a discussion of the rhetorical appeals—something that often gets confused with the key term rhetorical situation in ENGL 1010. Lark did not address the differences but these concepts, but instead focused on deeper content development for the student. As they proceeded, the student continued to express her ideas while Lark scribbled notes. The student’s skill in relating her ideas to unique metaphors was strikingly obvious, and Lark allowed her to speak with a free-flow of ideas. They concluded with an overall discussion of the argument paper’s purpose, which according to the student is to argue a belief, show other peoples’ beliefs, and explain why she doesn’t agree. Lark confirmed this general explanation and made sure the student felt confident about something they’d practiced in a previous session—writing thesis statements. The student expressed feelings of

confidence, which appeared to be much stronger after the short, thirty-minute session. Lark missed opportunities to discuss rhetorical situation and point the student toward personal awareness of her writing process. She did, however, acknowledge lessons from previous sessions to help the student identify places where she had grown.

For the other ENGL 1010 student writing about habits of mind, this assignment was not so simple. In contrast to Lark, Megan worked with her student on the initial learning of necessary skills for success in college writing. At the start of the session, the student expressed her concern with writing thesis statements, explaining that in her high school, they hadn't practiced writing complex thesis statements. Her high school teachers had given her a simple formula for thesis statements, and all the student was certain of was that she had to do more thinking to develop a strong thesis statement for her college essay. This moment would have been an ideal moment to discuss the true purpose of a thesis statement. Like one of the readings for ENGL 1010 at AUM explains, thesis statements are designed to advise readers about what they can expect to see in follow paragraphs. The student, clearly frustrated, may have benefited from a metaphor like Reid's "Pink House" metaphor:

Say you're driving down the interstate at sixty-five miles an hour with three friends from out of town, and you suddenly to them, "Hey, there's that amazing Pink House!" What happens? Probably there's a lot of whiplash-inducing head swiveling, and someone's elbow ends up in somebody else's ribs, and maybe one of your friends gets a glimpse, but probably nobody really gets a chance to see it (11).

As an important part of AUM's teaching for transfer curriculum, this reading very well may have been a part of this student's daily readings for composition class. If writing tutors become familiar with the readings and the purposes of different components of a writing assignment,

they can help to develop connections between classroom assignments and applications of writing knowledge. These techniques would make it easier to promote discussion about why they make the choices they do in their work. There was no such discussion, however, and after the student expressed her concern with thesis statements, Megan looked silently for the assignment description in Blackboard.

The remainder of the session consisted mostly of conversation for idea development, but there were also brief moments of implicit transfer throughout. For her paper topic, Megan's student chose different habits of mind from Lark's student: open-mindedness and accountability. Megan pointed to the concept of audience, noting that the student's reasons for choosing accountability could be relevant to her audience of other college freshman. However, the connections the tutor makes are brief, and she missed the opportunity to expound upon the questions of purpose the argumentative paper. The instructor asked students to illustrate their argument using their personal experiences. If the student spoke to her own experiences, she might have a more colorful, detail-oriented paper, which she could relate to the papers she'd already written this semester—the narrative and analysis/evaluation. Both previous papers required attention to detail, and argumentative papers are no different. It is only a variation of tone and word choice that differentiates the use of detail in the multiple genres required in ENGL 1010. Despite this missed opportunity to compare writing situations, the tutor works diligently to help the student communicate her ideas through speech, and the student leaves with stronger idea development than when she came.

As is seen by the two sessions above, even seasoned writing tutors have only a surface-level tendency of connecting previous writing assignments to current assignments. Both tutors asked about the previous papers during their sessions, but neither took time to help students

break down the assignment description and compare the requirements to the previous paper. Failing to do so was a missed opportunity to show the students how the analysis and evaluation paper is, in its entirety, a formative assignment in which students learn how to provide vivid details for analysis. When students in ENGL 1010 write an analysis and evaluation paper, they must learn to provide details that help the audience see what the writer sees. This connects to the argumentative essay because students must, again, use vivid detail, but this time the details provide supporting evidence for an argument. Even more concerning is that, by skipping over details in the assignment description, the tutors missed some vital information. Marie, for example, did not note that the argumentative research paper was supposed to relate to writing for college and beyond. As models for their students, both Lark and Marie would benefit by moving more slowly through the assignment description, identifying similarities and differences between previous assignments, and helping the students to practice language that will teach them to transfer learning independently.

It is also important to note that the writing tutors have a clear understanding of two concepts. First, they understand the concepts *behind* the key terms, and they are aware of the significance of things like audience, genre, and exigence in interpreting individual assignments. Second, they value the technique of using spoken conversation to develop ideas for early drafting purposes. The understanding that exists is key to the success of the AUM Learning Center, and they are praise-worthy accomplishments. I suggest that we take these understandings and extend them, using the tutors' existing knowledge to address one of the largest issues with transfer in the writing center: tutors are missing an overall sense of familiarity with the key terms used in the composition program. Like the students they are working with, in many cases, the tutors need a stronger sense of the language they can use to explain writing-related concepts. Having this

language will allow them to guide their students through the metacognitive processes of talking about their idea development and communication process.

Reflective Writing

In another session I observed, I saw a prime example of a moment when the lack of key term-related knowledge caused a great deal of confusion for both the tutor and student. In this session, I observed Lena with a multilingual student writing the reflection essay for her Unit 2 paper, the analysis and evaluation. The student brought the assignment sheet, notes on the assignment, and a rough draft for the tutor to review. When asked what specific questions she might have, the student expressed concerns about using the key terms in the reflection paper. The key terms for the analysis and evaluation paper are genre and rhetorical situation. When Marie asked the student to explain genre, the session slowed down. The student could name the assignment—analysis and evaluation—but she couldn't explain the meaning beyond "different types of writing."

While Marie agreed with the brief definition, she began to express concern with explaining the concepts: "I just want to make sure that if I'm explaining it that I explain it the same way you first learned it and the way your teacher wants you to learn it." She turned to a reading in the class, but stumbled through it, noting that the reading doesn't define genre either. Marie then turned to one of her common techniques and used metaphor to explain, "it's like when we talk about different genres of music. Like there's pop music and there's rock music and all sorts. Well, with writing it's the same." Marie lists different types of writing assignments and asks, "how did that influence the decisions you made?" She was asking the right questions, but her student still struggled to answer them. It is possible, of course, that being an older multilingual student added a few levels of complexity, because the student may not have had the

vocabulary to describe particular musical genres. The tutor may have also attempted to describe genre by talking about different fiction genres, but she instead moved on to the next topic.

After working through genre, Marie shifted to a discussion of rhetorical situation, which further complicated the situation. When she began to explain rhetorical situation, Marie seemed to realize that she wasn't confident in her knowledge of this word. She chose to look it up, and she found a definition on OWL Purdue: "Understanding and being able to analyze rhetorical situations can help contribute to strong audience-purposed and organized writing" ("Rhetorical Situations"). She stumbled through a broad explanation, but finally began to understand: "I would just think about, related to genre, and thinking about the purpose of this assignment, how was I trying to relate this to my audience? And so, it seems, yeah, like these ideas are connected, right? Cause it's all about thinking, how am I trying to convey information to the readers and what I am trying to convince them of?" The explanation Marie had for rhetorical situation is strong and meaningful, but yet she seemed to doubt her abilities. Furthermore, when she asked the student to explain the idea in her own words, she repeated the same concept she'd been stuck on for the entire session: trying to "follow the criteria and rules accordingly." The tutor continued to dig, and the student repeated the word "purpose."

Overall, there seemed to be a general understanding of what the key terms mean, but if the student can't find the words to explain it, how will she use them in her reflection paper? The key terms are of particular importance because they are a carefully selected set of words to build a student's vocabulary for communicating about writing. When students move into the reflective process in their writing class, the key terms provide them with foundational language to develop meaningful theories of writing. The key terms can be applied to varying writing situations, but their relevance will change depending on those situations. When the students and tutors have the

language to explain why they are changing their organization or tone, for example, the possibilities for metacognitive processes grow.

The focus during this session remained on the key terms for nearly 17 minutes, and as we neared the last ten, I wondered if Marie would mention the future. The student had successfully completed the portion of her paper that discussed her learning experiences in the classroom. She had connected her writing decisions to the class reading “What is Academic Writing?” expressing how the reading helped her to understand the differences in writing tasks and the approaches she can take. In “What is Academic Writing?” L. Lennie Irvin addresses a set of “myths” about academic writing, arguing that successful academic writing is more about understanding the writing situation than about perfection. Marie’s student demonstrated an understanding of the reading by explaining how word choice and tone are dependent upon the audience and genre. Clearly, the student had successfully participated in the initial learning process in the classroom. Her struggles were related more closely to a lack of vocabulary to communicate those ideas—a problem Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak aim to remedy through the key term component of their teaching for transfer model. Additionally, the student’s connections between the past and present writing assignments were forming, but she was still missing a large piece of the reflection—the discussion of the future. It wasn’t until after looking at the rubric at the twenty-two-minute mark that the tutor and student began to address this important piece of the writing assignment, looking forward to future applications of her new knowledge.

For Lena’s student, the understanding of underlying concepts is there, but she isn’t using the terminology to express the idea. The problem goes beyond a failure to connect present and future. She also does not explicitly identify connections between her last two essays and the upcoming argumentative essay. This issue cannot be blamed on the student’s role as a

multilingual student, because it seems to be a consistent trend that ENGL 1010 students are only reflecting on the surface level. They can repeat the ideas that we write in multiple genres and that we change our tone based on purpose on audience. However, very few are explaining how specific skills can be used in different ways depending on the genre. One example is the use of descriptive language. The purpose of descriptive language is different in the narrative and the analysis and evaluation, but the type of writing—vivid and descriptive—remains the same. What would be beneficial for students would be to identify and discuss the connections in their reflective essays. Consequently, one question to answer is this: how can tutors help students to dig more deeply to identify the genre conventions they use in the classroom?

Cover Letters

To end the semester with a final transfer-based project, ENGL 1010 students at Auburn University Montgomery are required to create a portfolio of their work for the semester. The main writing assignment for this unit is a cover letter, which describes the student's evolving knowledge from one assignment to the next, the role of key terms and course readings in the student's learning, the possible applications the student sees for their new knowledge, and the challenges the student still faces as a writer. Each of these four discussion points must be discussed with some depth in order for the student to succeed. Additionally, the student may write about their cover letter in the genre of their choosing, from a formal letter to a narrative.

For the cover letter, I observed Lark with the same student she had worked with for the argument. The student said she wanted to write a narrative for her cover letter, but she wasn't sure how to make it into a letter as well: "An inspirational narrative. It will ... I don't know if it's still a letter. It's like. It can be a letter and a narrative, right? Cause once I start telling a story in that narrative it's not really a letter." What was remarkable about the moment was the student's

ability to immediately start considering genre. She was aware of genre conventions and appeared to be comparing them in her head. Still, she struggled to communicate the ideas in complete sentences. This student, who is usually full of ideas and who expresses them openly, found herself at a loss for words. After watching her stumble across her explanation, Lark stepped in: “Yeah. With a narrative, you’ll have setting, characters, situation, plot, atmosphere ... if you were to take the narrative route, then you’d want to create an atmosphere—the situation—and have a place, an environment to put that situation in, right?” Lark’s questions are all prompting her student to reflect again on the genre conventions she used in her first paper—something that would be helpful for the purposes of overall transfer in addition to successfully completing the cover letter assignment.

Regarding Lark’s prompting about environment, there are interesting connections to environment in multiple different assignments. In the narrative genre, the environment or situation is more explicit because a setting is required, but we can take it beyond that and say that all writing has an environment. Lark’s mention of environment was particularly important because the student needed to create a fictional setting if she wants to use the narrative genre for her cover letter. But Lark and her student could dig deeper and say that each type of writing she did in this class had an environment—the rhetorical situation, which included an audience, a purpose, and a tone. In ENGL 1020, AUM composition instructors build on the idea of environment in their discussion of discourse communities, a concept that could also help ENGL 1010 students to point to future writing tasks.

For Lark and her student, the remainder of the discussion focused on the narrative components of her cover letter. The student identified possible characters, settings, and themes as well as imagery to represent the stages of her journey in ENGL 1010. Regarding her practice, the

student expressed uncertainty with how to answer the questions in the assignment sheet in narrative form. She asked, “What am I going to talk about with practice? Like, the rough drafts? First, the content. Then, the knowledge. I’m going to talk about it in the sense that you should read and use the mentor text when you’re writing.” Lark praises the student for connecting ideas to the assignment description, but that again got side-tracked by the creative element of the assignment. At the end of the session, I made note that the neglect of the assignment sheet is one of the more recurring issues for our tutors with ENGL 1010. Both inside and outside of the ENGL 1010 classroom, the assignment sheet deserves greater emphasis because it is the basis by which students identify the conventions and requirements for the particular assignment. Without a doubt, writing tutors should assist their students in writing the paper in front of them, but they must also put into practice one of the core principles of the AUM writing center—to give students the tools they need to succeed so they can eventually compete assignments independently.

Results

Throughout the observations, one common thread is the issue of viewing each assignment as an individual and unique activity, completely unrelated to others. While there were stunning light bulb moments during some of the observations, most of the connections tutors made between assignments were surface-level, and I have a small concern that it was more for performance than part of the natural habit. There is no way to know how the tutors would have behaved differently had I been absent. Despite the successful moments of facilitating transfer, tutors still need the foundational understanding that AUM’s Composition Program aims to do much more than teach students to write. As Elizabeth Wardle states, “we should no longer ask FYC to teach students *to write* in the university and instead construct FYC to teach students

about writing in the university” (767). It isn’t possible, for example, to teach students how to write lab reports for biology in the composition classroom. It is possible, however, to teach students how to read like writers, learn about genre conventions, and reflect on those conventions before and after completing writing assignments.

Like the students who had to identify the habits of mind for new college students, writing tutors must work to identify the habits of mind that work best for them. In their article about core principles for tutor education, Lisa Cahill and her colleagues describe the habits of mind they developed for their own writing tutors. Like the tutors at the AUM Learning Center, the tutors Cahill describes at Arizona State University primarily work to engage students in conversations about their writing projects. The conversation-based techniques are important for helping students to think critically as they develop content for their work. In doing this though, tutors must demonstrate specific qualities. Cahill and her team selected “inquisitiveness, persistent engagement, leadership, responsibility, openness, flexibility, creativity, and reflexivity” as their nine prime habits of mind in the writing center (12).

While each of these qualities were chosen by Cahill for the purpose of streamlined tutor evaluation, many of them can also be applied to the process of transfer in the writing center. Writing tutors can practice flexibility by continuously developing an understanding for genres and sub-genres in their field. They can build on this by experimenting with tutoring techniques when they receive student reflections that show a need for deeper initial learning. They can practice inquisitiveness by learning to draw the connections themselves, which can serve as a model for ENGL 1010 students. For writing tutors to successfully promote reflection, transfer, and metacognition, they need a set of solid guidelines they can follow during ENGL 1010 sessions. In Ch. 3, I will present a proposal for those guidelines.

Chapter 3: Recommendations for Training in Transfer

During my observations, the tutors used many valuable techniques to create a comfortable environment where transfer could take place. They showed a constant desire to build rapport with their students. One tutor continuously used the word “excellent” throughout the sessions, finding multiple opportunities to encourage the student and agree with their perspectives, even if the words on the paper didn’t frame the ideas well. This way, the student could understand that their ideas were strong and that the main requirements for revision and proofreading were in the word choices, sentence structures, and grammar. The tutors’ use of confidence-building techniques appeared to leave students more relaxed and prepared to develop their ideas in writing.

In terms of teaching for transfer, I learned a great deal about the ways experienced writing tutors use their existing skills to promote transfer throughout the writing process. The tutors all displayed an appreciation for a linear writing process that includes brainstorming, pre-writing, outlining, drafting, and revision. They skillfully approached each of these steps throughout multiple sessions to guide the student from the beginning to the end of writing an academic paper. Beyond the linear writing process, writing tutors encouraged students to verbally communicate plans and details for their papers. By communicating verbally about what they would like to do in the future, students practiced deep critical thinking not only about their messages, but also about *how* they would express their messages. The use of speech-to-text communication appeared to be extremely beneficial to students as it gave them opportunities to practice talking about their writing in a comfortable, casual environment.

The writing tutors also showed a strong foundational knowledge about the language they need to communicate about the writing process—an important start to successfully using the key

terms during tutoring sessions. One tutor used pre-writing language, like “brainstorming,” “note-taking,” and “list-making,” to encourage her student to get ideas on paper before writing the first draft. Other tutors used words like “revision” and “proofreading,” correctly differentiating the two while also explaining the differences to their students when appropriate. Despite some moments of confusion with the terms themselves, tutors used concepts related to genre conventions, audience, purpose, and tone to guide their students toward essays that fit into the genres in which they were writing. Their understandings of genre conventions, audience, purpose, and tone are important foundations for successfully assisting students across the university. This foundational understanding is a clear sign that writing tutors in the Learning Center have received high-quality training that promotes deep critical thinking skills. These critical thinking skills are absolutely necessary in moving towards best practices that focus on metacognitive reflection in the writing center. The language the tutors used to communicate ideas about writing to their students created a beneficial, additional learning environment for students. Where initial learning had not been complete with the classroom, the tutors were able to close the gap. The tutors’ love for providing quality tutoring showed through their constant critical thinking and rapport-building throughout each session. The success of the Learning Center thus far is a praise-worthy accomplishment.

My observations also provided opportunities for me to identify places for improvement in tutor training. Since the tutors I observed were very experienced, we can be certain that newer, less experienced tutors will need even more in-depth training in the areas I identified. As the experienced tutors from my observations move to new jobs, incoming tutors will need to be taught the above skills in addition to the tutoring for transfer skills I present below. Most importantly, it appears that writing tutors without a background in rhetoric and composition need

a stronger foundation in the basics of transfer. They can be encouraged by the idea that their positions are ideal for promoting transfer between semesters while also learning some tested techniques to use during their sessions.

For future tutor training, I recommend a focus on three areas. First, tutors need to build stronger understanding of key terms because they can be used to communicate not only about composition-related work in the present, but also future work after the students have completed the composition series. Again, the key terms for the composition program at AUM include: reflection, genre, rhetorical situation, audience, and purpose for ENGL 1010 and discourse community, genre, knowledge, context, and reflection for ENGL 1020. Two concepts that encompass many of the key terms the best are the concepts of rhetorical situations and genre conventions. Here, I propose a training module that helps tutors to identify the rhetorical situations and genre conventions of the types of writing done in English composition.

Second, tutors need deeper knowledge of the purpose and goals for reflective writing. In the composition series, students are expected to reflect on their writing and knowledge in-between every writing assignment. If tutors have not participated in reflection during training sessions, they may miss important components of reflection, whether that be reflecting on writing processes or forward-reflection to future writing assignments. The second training module I propose connects the rhetorical situations and genre conventions from composition courses to those that exist both in college classes beyond English composition.

Third, tutors can use deeper understandings of rhetorical situations, genre conventions, and key terms to discuss requirements for writing across the university. Tutors without a background in rhetoric and composition may need extra guidance to see the true purpose of composition courses. Seeing how English composition builds toward content-based courses will

allow them to participate in much more meaningful discussions with their students during tutoring sessions, especially when those sessions are focused on reflective writing. The third training module I propose will require tutors to list all of types of writing they are aware of in the university. Then, they can use their previous learning from Modules 1 and 2 to develop a stronger awareness of the similarities and differences between the many types of academic writing students regularly encounter.

Pre-Training Activities

Prior to any training activities, writing tutors need to develop a deeper understanding of the terms in a flexible way. As we saw with Lena and her session with reflective writing, the lack of a basic definition can cause tutors to stumble over their work. The tutors in the Learning Center are aware that presenting information differently from the instructor can create conflict for student learning, and they do their best to provide consistent instruction with content-based learning. The reflective writing session with Lena was a prime example of a moment when tutors may feel self-doubt, slowing down the tutoring session and taking away precious time for productivity.

During a one-on-one interview with Lena, I asked her about her feelings regarding the key terms. She began by expressing the need for a list of terms for the tutors—a list they could memorize and repeat during the sessions. This suggestion is entirely understandable. The tutors want to be able to say confidently that their explanations fit with what the students learn in the classroom. Unfortunately for them, the fact is that no such list exists, and that providing a list may cause deeper conflict because each instructor may have a unique way of teaching the terms in the classroom as well. Still, the tutors need something consistent they can follow so they can remain confident and maintain a steady pace during tutoring sessions.

However, the composition program at Auburn University at Montgomery itself does not provide a set of definitions of the key terms; this is because students benefit more from having flexible understandings of the terms. If students are taught to simply define the terms, they are likely to study them as if they expect to take a multiple-choice quiz. On the other hand, if students learn the key terms based on readings, lectures, and group work, they learn the language more naturally and apply them more naturally to real-life situations. The reasons for avoiding lists of definitions are understandable, but for tutors who must be able to explain these terms, it can be problematic.

Prior to the two training modules I propose, tutors should complete a set of short readings that illustrate the roles of key terms in academic writing. While completing the readings, tutors should underline specific sections which they believe express ideas behind the key terms for the composition series. These readings include the following:

1. “Ten Ways to Think About Writing: Metaphoric Musings for College Writing Student” by Shelley Reid
2. ““Mutt Genres and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?” by Elizabeth Wardle

For key terms like “audience” and “rhetorical situation,” tutors may share a reading from the English 1010 course at AUM: “Ten Ways to Think About Writing” by E. Shelley Reid. In this article, Reid encourages students to focus less on rules of correctness and more on focusing on the readers’ needs. When the tutors and students share this reading, there is a shared foundation of understanding that composition instructors are not pre-occupied with minor issues like these—that composition is more than a game of style and perfection. Reid argues that instead of the infinite list of rules, college writers should be concerned with following three principles:

1. Write about what you know about, are curious about, are passionate about (or what you can find a way to be curious about or interesting in).
2. Show, don't just tell.
3. Adapt to the audience and purpose you're writing for (Reid 4).

The connections between Reid's principles and rhetorical situation can be found throughout the article. According to Reid "when we write this way, we write *rhetorically*, that is, we pay attention to the needs of the author and the needs of the *reader* rather than the needs of the *teacher*—or the rules in the textbook" (4). After insuring that tutors familiarize themselves with ideas like these, we can begin to promote productive conversation about what it means to consider audience and situation during a writing assignment. Tutors already have the background knowledge to understand why and how audiences vary beyond the teacher, but they haven't had the practice they need to express these ideas to their students.

A reading to promote understanding of the key terms genre and reflection would be Elizabeth Wardle's article "Mutt Genres and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?" In her article, Wardle discusses the issue of FYC as a "general writing skills course": "the goal of teaching students to write across the university in other academic courses assumes that students in FYC can be taught ways of writing (genre and genre knowledge) that they can then transfer to the writing they do in other courses across the university" (Wardle 766). Because FYC courses have a main goal of writing and not about content, the rhetorical situation varies greatly from the natural situation in all other classrooms across the university. Wardle's concern is with teaching the university genres out of context—something that can be problematic for students as they attempt to transfer their knowledge into varying college courses.

For the writing tutors in the Learning Center, Wardle's section entitled "What We Know about Genre" would be a helpful short reading from which tutors may develop a stronger understanding of the role of genre in college writing. For tutors to guide their students well, they must understand the problem: "Recent findings about the nature of genre suggest that genres are context-specific and complex and cannot be easily or meaningfully mimicked outside their naturally occurring rhetorical situations and exigencies" (Wardle 767). This sentence alone, which introduces the section on current knowledge of genres, would produce a significant amount of discussion opportunities for the tutors. The word "exigence" tends to be an intimidating word for FYC students, but it shouldn't be pushed aside. As Wardle notes, "genres arise when particular exigencies are encountered repeatedly; yet each time an exigence arises, people must be attuned to the specifics of the current situation in order to employ the institutionalized features of the genre effectively—or, in some cases, throw them out" (768). In other words, the importance of a writing situation must be repeatedly, genuinely encountered for it to exemplify the genre realistically. When FYC students are expected to mimic a genre from a content course in their composition courses, they are being asked to do something that is incredibly difficult. The writing for varying areas of study, after all, cannot be divorced from the classes; in other words, genres are nearly impossible to separate from their authentic environments.

This knowledge can help writing tutors because it may give them the opportunity to connect how their own writing in various classes has had legitimate importance within the discourse communities of each class or subject. When tutors acknowledge how unique first-year composition is in comparison to content courses across the university, they can begin to understand how the skills in composition can be used realistically. Furthermore, this discussion

can give writing tutors a different view of genre than the traditional. For most writing tutors without any background in composition theory, “genre” brings to mind musical genres—rock, pop, hip hop—or the three broad, traditional genres they learned in high school—fiction, non-fiction, and creative writing. By developing deeper understandings of the key terms through short readings like these, writing tutors can be prepared to participate in hands-on learning activities in the training modules I propose here.

Module 1: Genre Conventions and Rhetorical Situation

After completing the pre-training readings, tutors will meet to discuss their learning. Since they have taken time to underline key term-related sections in these readings, they can begin with a brief discussion about how they see connections between the readings and the key terms. Then, they will move into group activities that allow them to actively reflect on how genre conventions and rhetorical situation play a role in composition assignments.

First, tutors will be broken into three groups. Each group will be assigned to analyzing a specific assignment type: 1) narrative, 2) analysis and evaluation, and 3) argument. Each group will complete an analysis of the rhetorical situation and genre conventions for the writing assignments for which they are responsible. Regarding rhetorical situation, tutors must identify the potential audiences and purposes for each of the assignments, thinking specifically of examples they have encountered in college. For the concept of genre conventions, tutors must analyze the specific choices writers make for their group’s writing assignment. For example, the group responsible for the narrative assignment may identify some of the typical qualities of a narrative. Experienced writers may know that narratives need creative components, such as imagery, characters, and dialogue, but inexperienced writers may not. Working in groups will help to ensure that tutors come up with ideas.

After the groups complete their analyses of rhetorical situations and genre conventions for their assignments, the groups will come together to make a list the ideas they discovered in each category. Instead of labelling the components by essay, such as “narrative” or “analysis,” the tutors will simply write the ideas un-labelled. The results will be a list of audiences, tones, example types, and purposes that may be used in different types of writing.

Module 2: Key Terms Beyond the Composition Classroom

In the next training, tutors will use their lists of rhetorical situations and genre conventions develop their own applications for key terms in writing assignments across the curriculum. With this training option, the tutors should break into groups with varying educational backgrounds in each. For example, the English majors should not be grouped together, but should instead be dispersed throughout the groups. Then, the tutors are randomly assigned two to three key terms to define. Each person in the group should be given an opportunity to define the term, using the ideas from the previous section for brainstorming material. They may do some informal research if they are lost, but most of the ideas need to come from the tutors. The leader of the session will be available to guide them should they get lost or confused on creating their definitions. After the groups are done, they should come together to present their ideas about their assigned terms, giving the other groups an opportunity to communicate and expand on what the terms mean.

Module 3: Connecting Key Terms to Writing Across the Curriculum

After discussing the pre-made definitions from the previous session can continue by utilizing knowledge composition students need to succeed with reflective writing assignments. In their groups from the previous session, students will work to make lists of different types of writing assignments that can be found in the college setting—from core courses to major-specific

courses. Tutors should think back as far as they possibly can, building varied lists of short, low-stakes writing and longer types of essays in the university.

After the lists are created, the groups will all come together to identify the connections between the three modules they've completed. The tutors will be encouraged to connect each of the unique writing assignments to their ideas about genre conventions and rhetorical situations, as well as the key terms in the composition program. This means finding similarities and differences between the essay types relating to tone, audience, and purpose. The results of these activities will be a deeper understanding of how the key terms also work with one another during the writing process. By developing visual representations of the connections through multiple lists, tutors will be able to participate in deep and meaningful discussion of what it means to apply writing knowledge beyond the composition classroom.

This training can benefit writing tutors from universities anywhere because the lists of assignments the tutors create will be unique to each university. While there is consistency within the content of courses across the country, there is also a chance that students from one university to the next can expect to encounter entirely different assignments from one another. Providing an opportunity for tutors to list the types of writing they've done in college is beneficial for many reasons. First, it helps them to practice reflection for themselves. Second, when lists are combined, tutors can get a broader idea of what types of writing happen in the university. Finally, it prepares tutors to help students with reflective brainstorming for reflection papers in-between assignments. When connected with key terms, which are relevant to writing situations in all universities, there are a stronger consistency in nation-wide composition instruction as well.

Conclusion

The three writing tutors I observed from the AUM Learning Center were all skilled, experienced tutors who had received years of previous training within the center. The students had already practiced many of the skills listed by Heather N. Hill in her primer for writing center directors. The tutors knew how to build rapport and inspiration for students, establish initial learning, and explain key concepts about writing. The tutors used their knowledge of brainstorming, pre-writing, outlining, drafting, and revision to guide their students through the outward writing process—those parts of writing that tutors and teachers can see. As the tutors worked through their training and interviews with me, they seemed not only interested but also invested in learning to use transfer in their sessions. My observations allowed me to identify the places where tutors still lack training and the opportunities for future training sessions.

In the future, writing center tutors will benefit from activities for a deeper understanding of the key concepts and the uses and techniques for reflection. The tutors will quickly learn how to assess the students for learning that can be carried from one course to another. Students may complete regular reflection in tutoring sessions by completing notes, outlines, and writing plans with tutors who are more deeply aware of teaching for transfer. As they write their reflections for their first-year composition courses, students will be able to return to those lists and use them to explain how they can use new knowledge in the future, bringing their metacognition to the next level. The techniques and recommendations listed may be adapted to fit with any English first-year composition program, which can be as varying in curriculum as the many content courses students will encounter across the university.

Adaptions to these training techniques will vary depending on the diversity of the student populations. My study does not acknowledge the unique needs of international students as it was beyond the scope of my research. This particular subject, however, is of growing importance as

AUM's student populations change. Surely, this is also true of many other universities.

Multilingual students and tutors will require a richer experience in vocabulary-building as they learn the words to talk about writing. Even more so, these students would benefit from a multilingual approach that allows them to use both or all of their languages as they practice metacognition in the writing classroom and during tutoring sessions. Similarly, many other unique populations would benefit from specific variations like these, and further research would be beneficial to the composition and tutoring communities. For small but growing universities like AUM, however, the recommendations here provide a sturdy starting point.

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