WRITING CENTER TUTORS' USE OF SCAFFOLDING WITH L2 WRITERS

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CONTEXT
33K Daytime BYU students
> 5% International ESL/L2 students
15K Writing Center tutorials per year
20% L2 writing tutorials
2016 Writing Center & ESL Lab merger

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE
Despite scaffolding being a primary tutoring strategy for working with writers, BYU Writing Center tutors report using scaffolding less and with decreased confidence when working with L2 writers. The problem is furthered by differences in expectations and linguistic, rhetorical, cultural disconnects.

INTERVENTION
A tutor training intervention was implemented to improve tutors' knowledge of, application of, and confidence using scaffolding with L2 writers. It also encouraged a mindset shift in thinking about L2 writing as different, not deficit. Training consisted of both classroom and practicum components to provide instruction as well as observation, practice, reflection, and feedback.

GUIDING THEORIES
- Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky)
- Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb)
- Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger)

PARTICIPANTS
- 20+ writing center tutors with advanced training & Level 2 or 3 tutor certification
- 10 self-identified L2 writers with scheduled 30-minute writing center consultations
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does training influence tutors’ actual use of scaffolding within L2 tutorials?
2. After receiving training, how do tutors perceive their knowledge of scaffolding as a tutoring strategy?
3. After receiving training, how do tutors perceive their use of scaffolding in L1 and L2 writing center sessions?
4. What factors influence tutors’ use of scaffolding in L2 sessions?

DATA COLLECTED

- 10 audio recorded L2 tutorial observations
- 5 pre-intervention tutor interviews & 5 post-intervention tutor interviews
- 19 pre-intervention surveys & 21 post-intervention surveys with tutors
- 2 post-intervention focus groups with L2 writers

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

In 10 recorded tutorials with L2 writers, scaffolding accounted for 46.7% of all tutoring strategies used.

While knowledge and use of scaffolding with L2 writers increased post-intervention, confidence using scaffolding with L2 writers decreased.

Tutors valued practical, experiential learning, particularly explicit grammar training.

Knowledge not only impacts the use of scaffolding within writing center tutorials; time, participation, and common ground are also influencing factors.